



THE DEFENCE OF DIAMOND ROCK.

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DIAMOND ROCK

T. NELSON & SONS
LONDON, EDINBURGH &
NEW YORK

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DIAMOND ROCK

OR

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

BY

J. MACDONALD OXLEY

Author of "Up Among the Ice-Floes,"

&c. &c.



T. NELSON AND SONS

London, Edinburgh, and New York

1894

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- XI. UNDER
- XII. SCENES
- XIII. HUNTING
- XIV. GOOD F
- XV. DIAMON
- XVI. A GALLA
- XVII. AN HON
- XVIII. TRAFALG

CONTENTS.

I. DICK HOLLAND JOINS HIS SHIP,	9
II. LEARNING THE ROPES,	26
III. THE BAPTISM OF FIRE,	43
IV. A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE,	60
V. A TRIP INLAND,	77
VI. WORK AFTER PLAY,	93
VII. IN ACTUAL SERVICE,	109
VIII. OVERCOMING AND BEING OVERCOME,	125
IX. THE TABLES TURNED,	138
X. IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY,	153
XI. UNDER THE BRITISH FLAG AGAIN,	169
XII. SCENES ON SHORE,	185
XIII. HUNTING PRIVATEERS,	200
XIV. GOOD FOR EVIL,	216
XV. DIAMOND ROCK,	234
XVI. A GALLANT DEFENCE,	251
XVII. AN HONOURABLE SURRENDER,	268
XVIII. TRAFALGAR AND HOME AGAIN,	285

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DIAMOND ROCK.

CHAPTER I.

DICK HOLLAND JOINS HIS SHIP.

IT was the day of her departure for a three years' cruise upon the West Indian station, and his gracious Majesty's stanch frigate *Gryphon* presented a scene of confusion well calculated to bewilder anybody but a veteran boatswain, accustomed to see order brought out of chaos on shipboard with wonderful expedition.

The deck was crowded with sheep, swine, and fowls for the officers' table; with barrels of beef, pork, and biscuits for the sailors' mess; with trunks, portmanteaus, bags, and boxes, containing the kits of the crew; not to mention a miscellaneous crowd of friends and relatives come to bid a reluctant, tearful good-bye; of tradesmen and duns anxiously endeavouring

10 DICK HOLLAND JOINS HIS SHIP.

to get payment of unsettled scores; and of dealers in all sorts of small wares, making the most of their opportunities ere the command would issue to clear the ship.

In a corner apart from all this bustle stood a little group that seemed to have thought only for itself, and to be quite oblivious of the turmoil around. It was composed of three persons—a slight, sweet-faced lady dressed in black, whose pale cheeks showed signs of much weeping; a stout, grizzled, honest-featured man-servant, holding tightly to a bag that looked as if it might contain a goodly store of travellers' comforts; and, finally, a boy of about fourteen years of age, who, as befits the hero of our story, must have more particular description.

There was not much of him to begin with. He stood not more than four feet ten in his stockings, and his fighting weight could not have much exceeded one hundred pounds all told.

Yet one did not need to look at him twice in order to feel convinced that, light and small as he seemed, he might prove himself an antagonist by no means to be despised in a fair fight. His frame was well-knit and symmetrical; his chest full and deep, so much so that at school he bore the nickname of

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"Dicky-bird," in allusion to his swelling bust; his features were regular and clear-cut; his naturally fair complexion was tanned to a light olive by constant exposure to the sun; his blonde hair curled crisply back from a broad forehead; and there were stamped upon his countenance, and expressed in every movement of his body, energy, resolution, and sanguine courage to a degree that gave good augury for his future career.

He now, poor little chap, found himself in a sore strait betwixt contending emotions. He felt keenly as any fond son could the parting from his mother, and her own unrestrained grief made it all the harder for him to keep back the tears that ever threatened to flood his smooth cheeks. Yet, at the same time, he fully recognized the dignities and responsibilities of his new position, and it seemed to him that no place had been left upon the programme for crying. So it was a hard struggle between pride and tenderness of heart, and it may just as well be confessed that neither side had it altogether its own way.

Mrs. Holland's grief was not without good excuse. The boy before her was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Her husband had been one of the most gallant and faithful captains in his

Majesty's navy, and after a brief but brilliant career had come home invalided, to linger out a year or two in growing weakness until the end came, while he was still comparatively a young man.

It was Mrs. Holland's hope and prayer that the boy, who was the joy and solace of her life, would be content to choose some shore-going occupation, when the time came for him to begin life for himself. But destiny had decided otherwise. The love of the sea was born in little Dick as surely as it had been in his father before him. To have bound him down to anything else would simply have been to miserably mar his life; and so it came about that, sacrificing her own desires to her son's, Mrs. Holland sought and obtained for him the appointment to the *Gryphon*, which rejoiced his heart while it almost broke hers.

The command came to "clear the ship" as they were still talking earnestly, Mrs. Holland mingling prayers with motherly injunctions, and Dick promising loyally to do everything she wished. Again and again did the weeping woman press her son to her bosom, and cover his face with kisses; and then at last, not daring to linger any longer, drew the veil over her face, and taking the arm of the man-servant,

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With a tremendous sigh Dick dashed away the tears that trembled on his cheeks, drew himself up to his full height, and followed his mother with his eyes as long as she was in sight, saying softly,—

“Dear, darling mother; how hard it goes with her to say good-bye to me! but I’ll write her big, long letters that will comfort her heart.”

To Master Dick’s credit be it said that although at school he would rather at any time have taken a good whipping than write a composition, he faithfully carried out his pledge of letter-writing, never letting a week pass without some sort of a scrawl; and the packets of rather illegible but unmistakably affectionate epistles that at regular intervals reached Brier Cottage, in sunny Kent, brought with them comfort beyond expression to the expectant woman, in whose eyes they were of surpassingly more importance than an admiral’s despatches.

Dick now proceeded to look about him. Although the shore folk had by this time all landed, the confusion on board seemed in nowise abated. The ship was slowly gliding out into mid-channel, her huge sails flapping loudly, and blocks creaking noisily as

the canvas swelled into the spaces between the yards; agile sailors were darting hither and thither, up and down, in obedience to the shrill whistling and hoarse shouting of shaggy boatswains; on the after-deck a group of officers in jaunty uniforms had gathered, and not knowing what else to do, Dick made his way towards them. No one noticed him at first as he stood there quietly, cap in hand. Then one of the officers did catch sight of him, and surprised at seeing a midshipman on the quarter-deck without any apparent business to be there, addressed him sharply,—

“What are you doing here, sir?”

Much taken aback at this unexpected question, poor Dick in some confusion was about to explain, when another officer, whose uniform betokened higher rank, overhearing the question, turned to see to whom it was addressed, and realizing the situation at a glance, said in a much kindlier tone,—

“One of the new midshipmen, no doubt.—Come forward, sir, and report yourself.”

Dropping his bag, Dick made a low bob, in his best style, and approached this officer, who was no other than Captain Fitewell himself, one of the bravest and most capable commanders in the navy.

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"Well, sir, will you be good enough to name yourself?" said the captain.

"Richard Holland, if you please, sir," answered Dick, with another bob.

"Oh ho!" exclaimed the captain, his bronzed face relaxing into a genial smile. "So you are little Dick Holland. Right well did I know your father, my boy, and many a year we knocked about together. I'm very glad to have you on my ship. If you've got the same stuff in you as was in your father, you're bound to make a good officer; and if you take him for your pattern, you'll always find in me a friend when you need one. Let me shake hands with you."

As Dick advanced with outstretched hand, he had the greatest difficulty in keeping from bursting into tears. His feelings had been under severe strain all day, and this unexpected warmth of greeting, following close upon the lieutenant's sharp challenge, all but broke down his last defence. However, by a heroic effort he kept himself under control; and looking up into Captain Fitewell's kindly face with brimming eyes, returned his hand-clasp with all the vigour of which he was capable.

The captain smiled at the ardour of his grip, and

then turning to the officer who had first addressed Dick, said,—

“Lieutenant Wadham, will you be good enough to introduce Midshipman Holland to the gun-room?”

Thus dismissed, Dick made another bob, recovered possession of the bag, and, with his heart in his mouth, followed his guide down the companion-way to the gun-room. He at once found himself in the midst of a very babel. Some ten or twelve lads, ranging in years from fourteen to twenty, were scattered about a long, narrow room, lighted only by three small port-holes, skylarking in the wildest manner. Some of the elders had evidently been indulging in more wine than was good for them, and were disposed to be either provokingly pugnacious or fulsomely affectionate, while the younger boys had to endure their insults or endearments, which were equally unwelcome, as best they might.

“Here you are; make yourself at home,” said the lieutenant curtly, and turning on his heel, left poor Dick to find his own way without even so much as an introduction. With a sinking heart but steady countenance Dick stood surveying the scene. It was not at all in accordance with his anticipations.

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rough, witless horse-play; the plain, bare, almost squalid look of the room, and the close, rank atmosphere, all tended to fill him with disgust. A great qualm of home-sickness came over him. He felt as though he should suffocate if he did not rush up on deck again; and he was just about to do so, when one of the lads, catching sight of him as he stood doubtfully in the doorway, shouted out,—

“Hollo! here’s the new mid.—Say, just come up here and report yourself.”

Thus addressed, Dick instantly gave up the idea of returning to the deck, and instead took a step further into the room. By this time all eyes were upon him, and he had to bear their scrutiny, until he was studied from head to heel.

“Come here and report yourself, I tell you,” was demanded of him again; and, by way of compliance, Dick moved as far as the table, and then stood still, not knowing what to say or do.

The boys ranged themselves on the other side, as though they constituted a board of inquiry and he was on trial before them. Then one, who was apparently the oldest and the most under the influence of wine, proceeded to examine him with drunken gravity.

“What’s your name?”

"Richard Holland."

"Who was your father?"

"Captain Holland, of H.M.S. *Firefly*."

This answer evidently made a good impression, for it showed that he came rightfully by his naval aspirations.

"How old are you?"

"Fourteen last October."

There was a murmur of surprise at this, for Dick's shortness of stature had conveyed the impression that he must be a year or two younger.

"Does your mother know you're out?"

The question hit poor Dick harder than his examiner could have imagined. He had for a moment, in the bewildering novelty of his surroundings, almost forgotten his mother, and now the picture of her pale, tear-stained face as she tore herself away from him came back with well-nigh overwhelming force. His own face flushed crimson, then blanched again. His lower lip trembled suspiciously, and his eyes became misty. It was only by a tremendous effort that he could control himself sufficiently to answer in a tone scarce audible,—

"My mother has just bidden me good-bye."

There was something in this answer and the effect it produced upon many of the listeners that went

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against the grain of the big fellow who had appointed himself Dick's inquisitor; and with a sneering laugh he filled a tumbler from a bottle that stood near him, and holding it out to the boy, said in a tone of rough command,—

“Here, then; drink her health like a man.”

Instead of accepting the proffered glass, Dick retreated a step and put his hands behind his back. He would not comply with this order for two reasons. In the first place, he had been brought up to believe that strong drink in any form was better left alone than trifled with, and he had pledged himself to his mother to have nothing to do with it under any circumstances. In the second place, even if he had been wont to take his wine, like many boys of his age, the thought of drinking his mother's health under such circumstances would have filled him with repugnance. He felt as though it would be nothing short of desecration.

Nettled by his hesitation to obey, the other, whose name was Bulstrode, and who was the bully of the gun-room, roared out fiercely,—

“Do you hear me? Drink the old woman's health, I say, and no heel-taps, mind you.”

The disrespectful allusion to his mother stung Dick to the quick. His face flushed again, but this time

it was with anger. His fists closed tightly. He straightened himself up, and looking his tormentor full in the face, said as quietly as he could,—

“I hear you perfectly well, but I have not the slightest intention of obeying you.”

A murmur of mingled admiration and apprehension went round the little company at this plucky reply. Bulstrode was accustomed to have it pretty much his own way among the middies, and this frank defiance delighted them while it enraged him.

“You haven’t the slightest intention of obeying me, hey?” he shouted furiously; “then, by ——, I’ll make you,” and with that he threw himself across the table and grasped Dick by the shoulders.

Now Dick had no lack of courage, but he also possessed a good share of common-sense. Had he obeyed his first impulse, he would have clinched with Bulstrode, and fought him as best he might. This, however, would have been a very foolish thing to do; for not only was Bulstrode more than a match for him in every way, but in all probability some of the others would give him assistance, if necessary. Dick thought of this, and although his fists were shut tight, he kept them by his side and looked steadily into his assailant’s angry countenance.

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His composed bearing rather disconcerted the bully, who had expected some show of resistance which would justify further violence. He therefore did no more than give Dick a shake, saying,—

“Are you going to drink that health?”

“I have given you my answer already,” Dick replied.

“Then I’ll give you mine,” growled Bulstrode.—
“Here, mates,” he cried; “come along, and we’ll make this puppy do as he is bid.”

With evident reluctance, yet lacking the strength of mind to refuse, several of the others approached, and Dick presently found himself stretched upon the table, his arms, legs, and head held fast, while Bulstrode endeavoured to force open his mouth to pour the wine down. Dick kept his teeth clinched in spite of the bully’s efforts, and the latter, growing more and more enraged, snatched up a marline-spike that chanced to be at hand, and was just about to thrust the sharp end into Dick’s mouth, with the certainty of inflicting hurt, when suddenly there came from the door a voice demanding in tones of authority,—

“What’s all this about? What mischief are you up to there?”

A hush instantly fell upon the noisy group. Those who had hold of Dick let go, and drew back from the table in a confused way, and Bulstrode threw the marline-spike hurriedly into a dark corner. The moment he was released Dick sat up, and as his tormentors seemed to have completely lost their tongues, the officer whose appearance had created such a sensation, and who was no other than the first lieutenant, Mr. M'Kinstry, turned to him for a reply, repeating his question in a much milder tone.

Now, indignant as Dick rightfully felt at the rude reception given him, he had no more idea of being an informer than he had of voluntarily yielding to Bulstrode's orders. So, getting down on the floor, he made his best bow to the lieutenant, and replied, in as unconcerned a tone as he could muster,—

“Oh, it's nothing much, sir! They were just initiating me; that's all.”

There was a murmur of relief from the boys at this manful response, and a look of warm approval came into Lieutenant M'Kinstry's face. He liked that kind of spirit in a boy, and he was shrewd enough not to spoil the good effect Dick's answer had produced by pressing his inquiry any further; so, pretending to be quite satisfied, he said in an off-hand way,—

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"That's all, hey? Well, don't carry your skylarking too far, you know.—And, by the way, Mr. Bulstrode, a word with you."

With a very uncomfortable, hang-dog expression, Bulstrode followed the lieutenant out of the room, much to the relief of Dick, who felt that now he would have a better chance to make friends with his new companions. In this he judged rightly, for no sooner had the bully disappeared than the middies crowded around him, shaking him by the hand, clapping him on the back, and otherwise manifesting their readiness to admit him to a friendly footing without further parley. He had made a good start with them. They were delighted with his frank, fearless manner, his bright, handsome face, and his sturdy little figure, and he soon found himself feeling at his ease. Names were given, ages compared, and experiences of home and school exchanged with all that freedom from conventional restriction which comes natural to boys of that age, and Dick quite forgot his homesickness while his tongue wagged as merrily as anybody's.

In the meantime the *Gryphon* was making her way into the chops of the English Channel under the influence of a spanking north-wester, and presently began to pitch and toss in a lively, irregular fashion, that

caused Dick to discover something which, thanks to the superb health he had enjoyed from his cradle, was previously unknown to him—namely, that he had a stomach with a mind of its own, and that this afore-said stomach held very decided opinions on the subject of rough weather. The dialogue that ensued between them might be set down somewhat in this way:—

Dick speaks: "What's the matter with you down there? What are you grumbling about?"

Stomach replies: "Matter enough. I can't bear this provoking pitching and tossing. Why can't the vessel behave herself?"

"Because it can't, and there's no helping it; so just keep still, will you?"

"I'll keep still if the ship will; but if the ship's going to tumble about as she's doing now, why, I'm going to tumble about too."

And tumble about it did, until at last poor Dick was fain to give up the contest and lie down upon a locker with his head pillowed upon his bag, feeling himself to be the most miserable specimen of humanity alive. Oh dear, how sick and weak and despairing he was! Surely nobody ever was quite so bad.

While he lay there, finding it none too easy a task to keep his place on the hard, smooth cover of the

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locker, dinner was brought in, and despatched by the other middies with a relish that showed they had no internal qualms, although it seemed incomprehensible to Dick that anybody should have an appetite under such circumstances.

As soon as the hammocks were slung he crawled into his, feeling more dead than alive. It was much more comfortable there than on the hard locker, but he continued to feel very wretched. His homesickness came back to him with redoubled force. He longed for his mother as never before in his life. Oh, how welcome would have been her soft cool hand upon his burning forehead, and her gentle voice lovingly cheering him! Who can blame him if, thinking of this and feeling as he did, he drew the blankets over his head, buried his face in the pillow, and gave way to the tears that had hitherto been so bravely kept back, mingling with them broken prayers that God would take good care of both his mother and himself until they should be reunited.

CHAPTER II.

LEARNING THE ROPES.

BY the time the *Gryphon* had exchanged the chops of the Channel for the billows of Biscay, Dick managed to get well on his sea-legs, and started in to master his new duties with a vim and apt intelligence that soon won for him the good-will of his superior officers, and still further intensified the ill-will of Bulstrode, who tried hard to have him set down as a prig, in which, however, he had not much encouragement.

It was not long before Dick began to feel thoroughly at home. 'Tis true the salt, tough "junk," the thick, greasy soup, the heavy, gummy "duff," the rocky "hard tack," and the strong black tea and coffee, entirely innocent of milk, were poor substitutes for the toothsome if not sumptuous country fare he had been accustomed to at Brier Cottage; but then the sea life gave him an appetite keener than even the Kentish

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downs could, and there never was much left on his plate at the end of the meal. As for the sleeping accommodations, why, what better bed could a hearty boy wish than a well-slung hammock with plenty of blankets? and if it was a trifle draughty between decks sometimes, that only showed there was no lack of pure air.

He soon discovered that a midshipman's life at sea was far from being an idle one. There were hard lessons in navigation to be learned, pistol and cutlass drill to be mastered, long watches on deck to keep, and so forth. But he was determined to lose no time in getting a good grip of his work, and he made rapid progress. He had the good sense not to hesitate in asking questions about anything he did not know. No foolish pride tied his tongue, and as his manner was uniformly respectful, his inquiries met with a ready response from even the gruffest of the officers. They recognized the sterling stuff that was in the lad, in spite of his diminutive size, and deemed him worth encouraging.

Among the sailors he grew to be a great favourite. His frank, unpretentious manner, his cheery whistle, his hearty laugh, and above all his courteous way of giving orders, which seemed to imply that the men

had feelings worth respecting, completely won their honest hearts. They nicknamed him the "Bantam" among themselves, in allusion to his alert springy step and small stature, and it was the general opinion in the forecastle that Mr. Dick Holland would certainly be an admiral in due time, provided he kept out of Davy Jones's locker all right.

He was not the only new middy on the *Gryphon*. The day before he came on board another lad joined the ship, being brought down by his elder brother, who seemed to have little sympathy for the poor lad's evident shrinking from the ordeal before him. This was Arthur Tenderly, a slight, pale, fair-haired lad, with gentle blue eyes and a shy weak face, who had been pitched into the navy sorely against his will, partly because his father did not know what else to do with him, having three or four elder sons to provide for, and partly because it was hoped that the active, hardy, adventurous life might make a man of him. He was utterly unsuited to his novel and trying surroundings, and made little effort to accustom himself to them; so that, as was inevitable, he became the butt and fag of the gun-room.

Among all his companions only one showed him any sympathy or consideration, and that was Dick.

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This was due in some measure to his looking upon him with a certain fellow-feeling, because they were both fresh recruits, and also to the fact that if Dick was small of body he had the heart of a giant, and always sympathized with the under dog in the fight. Tenderly soon came to regard Dick as his champion—which seemed somewhat absurd, in view of the fact that he was half a head taller, though only a month or so older—and attached himself to him with a devotion which pleased Master Dick, even though it rather bored him at times. In allusion to this attachment, Arthur was appropriately nicknamed “the Tender,” and the last syllable of his name was rarely heard in the gun-room.

Tenderly got permission to have his hammock slung alongside of Dick’s, and took a great deal of comfort in having his doughty little friend close at hand. For there was plenty of rough horse-play and practical jokes, involving hard knocks, on board the *Gryphon*, in spite of the efforts of the first lieutenant, who strongly disapproved of such proceedings. One night when neither Dick nor Arthur was on watch, and were able to turn into their hammocks early, the former, for some reason or other, possibly because of an over-indulgence at dinner in the plum-duff, which

happened to be particularly good, could not get to sleep with his usual promptitude. He was lying awake, feeling very cozy and comfortable in his snug hammock, and listening to the noises on the deck—the shrill whistling of the wind through the maze of rigging, the creaking of the blocks, and the gruff shouts of the men—when, by the aid of the lantern swung at the companion-way, which did little more than make darkness visible, he made out a form creeping stealthily in his direction, and at once suspected some trick was about to be played. Half shutting his eyes he carefully watched from under the lids the movements of the figure. He at first thought his hammock was to be attacked, and chuckled inwardly, saying to himself,—

“Aha, my boy! perhaps I’ll teach you to let sleeping dogs lie!”

But instead of coming to him the figure made for Tenderly, and before Dick could take in the situation there was a sound as of a keen knife cutting through cords, and instantly the sleeping boy’s hammock dropped head-foremost to the deck, a dull thud proclaiming that its occupant was stunned by the fall. With the agility of a monkey Dick sprang from his hammock, and flung himself upon the intruder, who,

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quite unprepared for so sudden an assault, was easily tumbled over.

"You sneaking coward!" hissed Dick, in a fine excess of righteous indignation, "to play such a scurvy trick on poor Tenderly."

Just as he spoke he identified his prisoner. It was Bulstrode, who had just come off his watch on deck, and thought to have a little fun—save the mark!—at the expense of "the Tender" before turning in. For a moment the bully had been so bewildered by Dick's swift attack that he made no resistance, but recognizing his captor in the next moment he spluttered out, "Let me up, you young puppy, or I'll break every bone in your body," and put forth his strength to free himself.

It was a most unequal struggle. Besides their disparity in size and weight, Dick had only his night-clothes on, while Bulstrode was in his pea-jacket, and, like the brute he was, he dug his nails into Dick's unprotected flesh, as they struggled together, so that the latter was fain to cry out,—

"All right: I'll let you up, but you're a miserable coward, all the same."

Puffing and panting Bulstrode rose to his feet, and looking the very picture of fury, was about to aim a

heavy blow at Dick, who stood up to him unflinchingly, when the voice of the first lieutenant broke in upon them, demanding,—

“Hold there! Mr. Bulstrode, stand to one side.—Mr. Holland, may I ask you the meaning of this disturbance?”

Dick drew himself up, saluted respectfully, and without speaking pointed to where Tenderly lay just as he had fallen, not having moved since his sudden descent to the deck. Mr. M’Kinstry went over at once to the boy, saying,—

“H’m! I can easily guess how this happened.”

He found Tenderly insensible. His head had struck the deck with cruel force, and the blood from a nasty cut just behind his right ear was staining the blankets.

The lieutenant’s face grew very dark when he saw this. He had no need to ask any questions. The clean-cut rope told its own tale; and saying sternly to Bulstrode, who was doggedly standing by, “You may go. You will hear further about this in the morning,” he turned with a very different countenance to Dick.

“May I put Tenderly into your hammock, Mr. Holland, until we can get his own reslung?” he asked.

“Why, most certainly,” responded Dick, and be-

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tween them they lifted the still senseless lad gently in; and then Mr. McKinstry went in search of the ship's surgeon, in whose hands Tenderly soon recovered his wits, and his wounds were duly plastered up.

Then the lieutenant bethought himself of Dick, and asked him with some concern,—

“By the way, Holland, were you hurt at all? Bulstrode had you very much at a disadvantage.”

“Nothing to speak of,” answered Dick cheerily, although at the time his flesh was quivering with pain in more than one place where Bulstrode's long nails had been making play during their short but severe struggle.

“You had better turn in again, then,” said Mr. McKinstry. “I feel bound to say that I am very much pleased with the part you have taken in this matter, and shall have pleasure in duly reporting it to Captain Fitewell. Good-night.”

“Good-night, sir,” cried Dick, his face radiant at these kind words; and tumbling into Tenderly's hammock he went to sleep, feeling that he would put up with twice as many bruises for the sake of the first lieutenant's commendation.

The next morning Bulstrode was summoned before Captain Fitewell, and a severe lecture administered to

him, besides orders to do all sorts of disagreeable duty for the following month. With that lack of candid logic characteristic of such natures, he held Dick responsible for getting him into this trouble, quite ignoring his own contemptible action, and hated him with a perverse malignity that boded ill for Dick should it ever be in the other's power to do him serious injury. As for Tenderly, his attachment to Dick became a positive adoration. No dog could love a kind master more unreservedly and unselfishly than he did his little protector. And the day was to come when he would well repay Dick for thus standing by him.

In the meantime the good ship *Gryphon* was making satisfactory progress towards her destination. A fortnight brought her to Madeira, where a short stay was made to lay in fresh fruit and water; and Dick had a chance to stretch his legs, by trying how far he could ascend the magnificent mountain at whose feet the white town bathed itself in glowing sunshine. Three weeks more, and the frigate was bowling before the trade-winds straight towards Barbadoes, which lovely island was duly reached one fine evening, and anchor cast in Carlisle Bay, where Dick had his first glimpse of the New World.

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What a wonderful land it was to the bright, observant boy! and what inexhaustible delight he took in the striking scenes about him! His father had lived long enough to take him upon his knees and "spin many a yarn" concerning his adventures and experiences among these "summer isles of Eden," lying in their "dark purple spheres of sea;" and Dick's imagination being very active and his memory retentive, it seemed to him, as he recognized one picture after another, as though he must be revisiting places once familiar. The crystal-clear water as blue as the heavens above, and breaking in frothy billows upon cream-coloured sand; the bewildering masses of foliage that clothed the hills at whose base the houses stretched in irregular lines of white, or straggled up the slopes until they lost themselves in the mazes of verdure; the crowds of picturesquely-dressed people of all grades of colour, from the coal-black of the African negro to the pale ivory of the lately-arrived European, who seemed to have nothing to do but smoke and lounge about with curious eyes and chattering tongues,—these and a thousand other sights equally novel kept him in the liveliest state of joyous excitement.

He was wild with eagerness to get ashore, but

being the junior middy on board, would have had to wait some time for his turn, had not Lieutenant M'Kinstry, who was about to go ashore with some despatches, catching sight of him as he stood near the gangway, asked,—

“Would you like to accompany me, Holland? If so, I'll just wait a minute while you get into your shore-going togs.”

With an explosive “Thank you, sir,” Dick darted below, and in a trice reappeared, looking remarkably well in his white duck trousers, trim blue jacket with double row of gilt buttons, and natty gold-banded cap, his dirk hanging at his side. The lieutenant gave him an approving glance. He had a warm appreciation of promptitude and neatness, those precious qualities boys are so apt to lack.

They stepped into the stern sheets of the cutter, the sailors bent to their oars, and their oars bent in their sinewy hands, making the boat foam through the sparkling water at a rate that soon brought them to the landing, and into the midst of a crowd of people, who assailed their ears with all sorts of questions and exclamations. It was an old story to the lieutenant, and he pushed his way indifferently through the throng, Dick following in his wake with

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eyes stretched to their utmost capacity ; and so they came to the admiral's headquarters, where the despatches were duly delivered. As the answers would not be ready for some little time, Mr. McKinsty said to Dick,—

“ You can run about for a couple of hours, Holland, and see the town. But mind, be back at the landing by noon.”

“ Oh, thank you, sir ! I will, sir,” exclaimed Dick, delighted at being given his liberty ; and touching his cap, he set off to do the sights. There was no fear of his getting lost, the harbour being always in sight, and the *Gryphon* riding at anchor amidst a group of smaller ships ; so he felt entirely at his ease as he leisurely strolled through the streets. The negroes interested him immensely. They all seemed so good-humoured and jolly, as though they had not a care or creditor in the world. He smiled upon them right and left, and happening to have some small coins in his pocket, whenever he came across a particularly merry little darky, he would drop one into his hand, much to the youngster's delight, receiving in reply a beaming grin and, “ Buccra gentleman good—very good.”

Not knowing or caring where he went, he gradu-

ally strayed from the better part of the town into a quarter much affected by sailors' lodging-house keepers, crimps, smugglers, and other such ill-favoured gentry. When he realized this he quickened his steps in order to get away from so undesirable a locality. As he was hurrying along, the door of one of the many drinking-places was suddenly flung open, and a big negro lurched out into the street, coming into collision with Dick before the latter had time to avoid him. The shock almost threw the boy down, and drew upon him the attention of the negro, whose anger seemed to be instantly aroused by the sight of the uniform.

He was a hideous-looking fellow, broad of shoulder and deep of chest, but puny and misshapen from the waist downwards, the shrunken shanks being absurdly out of proportion to the huge trunk. Close tufts of black wool did duty for moustache and beard, and his hair—if hair it could be called—was twisted into a hundred short plaits, that bristled out like thick porcupine's quills. The livid scar of a terrible sabre-cut adorned his nose and cheek, and two big gold rings his ears. A dirty linen shirt, a short pair of cotton drawers, and a huge Panama hat constituted his dress.





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A more repulsive specimen of humanity Dick had never seen before, and he recoiled from him in disgust. This seemed to still further incense the negro, and with a horrid oath he aimed a blow at the boy's head that would have knocked the senses out of him had it reached its mark; but Dick was too quick for him, and deftly dodged it, at the same time drawing his dirk and assuming an attitude of defence—for he could not bring himself to fly even before so over-matching an opponent. He would rather play David to his Goliath, and take the chances.

A crowd had gathered at once, forming a sort of ring about the two, around which they gyrated for a moment, the negro happily being too drunk to turn quickly, and Dick finding it easy to dodge him. Now Dick had been one of the best players in his school at the good old English game of football, and was an adept at "hacking." The manifest weakness of the negro's lower limbs suggested to him the idea of giving him a "hack over" that would teach him a lesson. Sheathing his dirk he drew himself together and watched for his opportunity. It came very soon. Straightening himself up after an unsuccessful charge, the ruffian again bore down upon the midshipman. Instead of fleeing, Dick darted forward to meet him,

and before the negro could divine his purpose, administered a kick with all his force upon the bare black shin, a few inches above the ankle.

It was a grand success. With a roar like that of a wounded lion the big brute pitched forward upon his nose, striking the stony street with a force that even his thick skull could not withstand unhurt, amidst exclamations of, "Hurrah for buccra gentleman! him mighty good little man! Coromantee crack him skull sure—serve him right too," and so forth from the approving and admiring crowd.

The next moment Dick felt himself picked up and placed upon the shoulders of a stalwart mulatto.

"Hollo, my good fellow!" he cried, considerably surprised at this proceeding; "where away now? What port are you making for?"

"All right, massa," was the reassuring response. "Me take you all safe to landing just same as horse; you stay still."

Nothing loath, Master Dick did stay still; and thus perched upon his new friend's broad shoulder, and escorted by the crowd that witnessed the overthrow of the negro, he arrived at the landing just as Lieutenant M'Kinstry came down in earnest conversation with another naval officer. The noise of the crowd at-

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tracted his attention, and catching sight of Dick in his elevated position, a smile broke over his face, and he hailed him with a pleasant—

“Hollo, Holland! This looks like a triumphal procession. What have you been up to now?”

Dick touched his cap, slid down from his human steed, and approaching the lieutenant, made a brief and modest report of the circumstances; whereupon Lieutenant M’Kinstry clapped him on the back, saying heartily,—

“Well done, Dick! You sustained the credit of the service nobly. Come now; let us hurry on board. I have important news for Captain Fitewell.”

As they were rowing back to the ship, the lieutenant, his face radiant at the prospect of active service, told Dick what the important news was.

“Bony has broken out again,” he explained. “The truce of Amiens is over, and we can go at Johnny Crapaud to our hearts’ content. There’ll be lots of fighting, Dick; that means quick promotion, you know, for the chaps that keep the number of their mess.”

Dick felt a strange sense of mingled elation and trepidation at these words. He had a warrior’s heart, and the idea of fighting with his country’s hereditary

enemies, the French, pleased him mightily. At the same time the thought naturally came to him,—

“Shall I be one of those who’ll keep the number of their mess? or how will it be?”

The future was full of opportunity and also of peril. God alone knew what it had in store for him.

Brought up as he had been to believe implicitly in a Divine providence, ever careful of those who put their faith therein, Dick held different views of the future from any of his companions. They put their trust in what they called “luck,” and were willing to take their chances. He placed his trust in God, to whom he daily prayed, and thought nothing of luck or chance.

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CHAPTER III.

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE.

I N order to get the bearings of this story correctly, it will be necessary for a moment to take a leap from the New World to the Old. That marvellous man—demi-god or devil, according to your point of view—the first Napoleon, had been keeping not only Europe but Asia, Africa, and America alike in constant turmoil. The splendid victories of the English at Alexandria and Copenhagen having taught him that his pace was rather too fast to last, and that he must have a little breathing-space to restore the navy which Nelson had shattered and replenish his other resources, the treaty of Amiens was entered into in the year 1802 between England, France, Spain, and Holland, and the same year saw Bonaparte declared consul for life, with the emperor's crown coming clearly into view.

This treaty was understood by all parties to be the

hollowest kind of a truce—merely the interval between the rounds of a fight that was far from finished; and accordingly nobody was surprised when a year and a half later the sword once more sprang from its scabbard, and the struggle which began this time was to know neither treaty nor truce until the cause of all the trouble, defeated and discrowned, went to banishment and death upon the rock of St. Helena.

The West India Islands—that necklace of precious pearls strung across the ocean from Florida to Venezuela—were very dear to Napoleon. He considered them to be among his choicest possessions. But the English held a similar opinion, and as they could not agree upon any satisfactory division of the jewels, there was no other alternative than to fight for them. The orders Captain Fitewell received at Barbadoes accordingly were to get ready without delay for active service, it having been determined to strike the first blow at the neighbouring island of St. Lucia.

The following week was one of intense activity on board the *Gryphon*. The frigate had to be put into fighting trim, and this meant plenty of work for everybody. Dick watched the preparations with intense interest, and was ever ready to fly about with orders, so that he seemed to have quite as much bus-

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iness on hand as the first lieutenant himself. Every inch of the rigging was carefully inspected, and all weak spots replaced or strengthened; the guns with their powder and shot were made ready for immediate use; the decks and cabins were cleared of everything that could be spared; the cockpit was fitted up for hospital use; cutlasses and boarding-pikes were made keen as razors; and nothing left undone by Captain Fitewell to get his good ship ready for serious work.

It was a beautiful day in June when the expedition sailed. Its fleet comprised three ships-of-the-line, and three frigates of the same type as the *Gryphon*, besides some smaller craft. In addition to their full crews, each vessel carried a large number of soldiers. One day's easy sail brought them to their destination. Much to the disappointment of the naval part of the expedition, no ships were found to oppose them, and the soldiers having been easily disembarked at Choc Bay, the sailors were reduced to the position of passive spectators.

Dick was greatly disappointed at this. He wanted to get his first smell of powder with as little delay as possible. He therefore determined, if possible, to obtain permission to accompany the land forces in their attack. Naturally he made known his mind to

his friend the first lieutenant. When Mr. McKinsty heard his request he burst out laughing, and taking him by the shoulders turned him around as though he wanted to inspect him thoroughly.

"Bless me, you young fire-eater, are you in such a hurry to get your first taste of blood as that? Can't you wait until the *Gryphon's* turn comes? It won't be long, I can tell you."

Dick blushed, and looked as though he rather regretted speaking. He did not want to be thought in a hurry to "taste blood." Noticing his confusion, Mr. McKinsty, still smiling, asked,—

"And what do you propose to do, Master Holland? Join General Grinfield's staff, and give him an occasional bit of advice?"

"Hardly that, sir," answered Dick; "but as there won't be any work for our ships, and we've got to lie here until the soldiers come back, I thought perhaps I might be allowed to accompany them and have a look at the fighting."

"Not a bad idea, my boy; I had the very thing in my mind myself. I'll speak to the captain about it; perhaps he'll let you go with me."

Dick's face beamed with delight. To go under the lieutenant's wing—what better could he wish?

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"I'd a mighty sight rather be on Mr. M'Kinstry's staff than General Grinfield's," he chuckled to himself.

An hour later Mr. M'Kinstry sent for him and told him that the necessary leave had been granted, and to hurry up and make ready to go on shore. It need hardly be said that Master Dick wasted no time over his toilet. Yet a neater-looking middy never trod the quarter-deck than he, as he stood at the gangway awaiting the coming of the first lieutenant. He was dressed in full uniform, and armed with a dirk, a cutlass, and a pistol,—which equipment, to tell the truth, he found rather heavy at his waist, although he would have died rather than confess it. Bulstrode, lounging by with a very glum expression of countenance—for he had applied to go on shore but had been refused—gave Dick a glance of mingled jealousy and hate, muttering so that he could hear it,—

"Who wouldn't be the lieutenant's poodle? Keep to heel now, doggie, and don't get lost."

But Dick was in too radiant a humour to mind even so coarse a taunt, and turning to Tenderly, who also stood near, said gaily, with a meaning glance at Bulstrode,—

"I'd rather be poodle than a bull-dog; wouldn't you, Arthur?"

Bulstrode heard the words, and his face grew still darker; but before he could say anything further he was called to another part of the ship, and a few minutes later Dick was in the cutter beside the lieutenant, gliding swiftly shoreward.

It was late in the afternoon when they landed; but they were in time to see from a distance the first brush with the enemy. This took place before the town of Castries, and was of short duration, the French outposts soon giving way, and the governor-general, Nogues, retiring with his whole force to the strong post of Morne Fortune, leaving Castries in the hands of the invaders.

A summons to surrender was sent him, which he politely refused, his calculation being that he could stand a siege until the rains came on, and then the British would have to retreat, as nothing could be done during the rains. General Grinfield understood this, and, notwithstanding the difficulty of the enterprise, resolved to attempt an assault. Orders were accordingly given that Morne Fortune should be stormed at daybreak.

When Dick heard these orders he fairly danced for joy. The storming of a strong fortress was an ideal kind of fight, and it would give everybody a chance.

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So soon as it was determined upon, the aid of the sailors was called in, and all that night they were busy making rope-ladders and preparing grappling-lines, while the best men on board each ship were picked out to join the soldiers in their difficult venture.

At four o'clock in the morning Dick was roused from a sound sleep by the lieutenant, and the dawn of a West Indian midsummer day was breaking in all its ineffable beauty as the two friends made their way to the front. In perfect silence the united forces encircled the fortress, and then suddenly hurled upon it a storm of lead and iron that swept its walls clear, and compelled its defenders to seek shelter behind the embrasures, from which they replied with a persistent though almost harmless fire.

So soon as the walls were cleared, the order was given to fix bayonets and charge upon the fort. With a true British cheer that was heard out at the fleet, and made the poor people in Castries tremble, the soldiers, headed by gangs of Jack-tars bearing scaling-ladders, rushed to the attack in admirable order.

"Now then, Dick," cried Lieutenant M'Kinstry, "come along, keep close to me, and we won't miss any of the fun."

"All right, sir," chirruped Dick; "I'll keep alongside if I can."

Like a human avalanche the British forces fell upon Morne Fortune. With wonderful skill and speed the scaling-ladders were fixed at a score of points simultaneously. With admirable courage the garrison sought to repel their assailants; but as fast as one ladder was thrown down another took its place, and every man they disposed of was replaced by two no less in earnest about getting inside the citadel.

The lieutenant and Dick were among the first to obtain a foothold upon the walls, happily without receiving a scratch, and drawing their cutlasses they plunged into the thickest of the fight. It was familiar work enough to the man—for storming a fortress and boarding a ship are very much alike—but entirely new to the boy, and yet he went at it as though he had long served his apprenticeship.

"Well done, Dick! well done, my boy!" shouted Mr. M'Kinstry, as with a clever blow Dick knocked the pistol out of the hand of a French officer who was aiming at the lieutenant. The very next moment the lieutenant returned the service by cutting down a soldier who proposed to spit Dick on his bayonet.

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"Come along—keep close—they're giving way. We'll soon clear the rascals out."

The lieutenant was right. The garrison had made a gallant stand. But there was no resisting the British bayonet. One by one the defences were driven in, and at the end of half-an-hour Morne Fortune was taken, with the loss of hardly a hundred men.

Exhausted by his exertions, Dick threw himself down in a casemate to get breath. It was the first moment for thought he had had since the attack began, and he felt like one awaking out of a dream. He looked around him at the tokens of the strenuous conflict. Here a man was lying, his life-blood fast ebbing out from a terrible gash in the neck; there was another, already growing cold in death; swords, bayonets, muskets, and pistols strewed the place; the air was foul with the reek of powder and the sickening smell of blood, while the sun, now high in the heavens, poured a flood of scorching heat upon the pitiful scene.

The reaction that naturally follows strong emotion did not escape Dick. A wave of intense repugnance and a wild desire to flee from so terrible a place came over him. He repented of ever having put

himself in the way of such an experience. He covered his face with his hands, and his feelings were near unmaning him, when Lieutenant M'Kinstry came up, and observing his attitude, exclaimed in much concern,—

“Hollo, Dick! what's the matter? Are you hurt?”

Dick lifted his burning face, and looked at the lieutenant through misty eyes. Then with a great effort he regained control of himself, and springing to his feet, replied steadily enough,—

“No, sir, not a bit, thank God. But it's that,” pointing expressively to the harrowing sight before him. “I'm not used to it yet, sir.”

The lieutenant did not laugh at him. He remembered well how his first fight affected him, and shrewdly guessing the best way of diverting the boy who had just received his baptism of fire, he said sympathetically,—

“I understand you, Dick, and you needn't feel ashamed of it. But look here: since you and I are sound, don't you think we could do something for the poor beggars who haven't been so lucky?”

“Oh yes, sir,” cried Dick, forgetting all his own troubles in the thought of rendering assistance to others. “What can we do, sir?”

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"Well, if we can only find where the frog-eaters keep their water, we can give the poor fellows a drink, any way."

After some searching around they discovered a cistern of water, and filling a couple of jars they went about among the wounded, assuaging their thirst, bathing their wounds, and binding on cold bandages, receiving in return many a grateful "God bless you! that's better, sir." In his sympathy for the sufferers and eagerness to help them, Dick entirely forgot his feelings of nausea at the sickening sight before him. The worse the wound the stronger his desire to alleviate the agony of the patient, and the ships' surgeons paid him more than one compliment for his prompt, intelligent assistance.

Within an hour after the surrender the British had all their wounded carefully removed to their ships, while the unfortunate dead were buried during the afternoon with appropriate ceremonies. Although not a blow had been struck by them after the French surrendered, the loss of the latter was much heavier than theirs, and over six hundred prisoners were taken in addition.

The capture of Morne Fortune decided the fate of the island, all the other ports being given up without

a struggle. From St. Lucia the British fleet proceeded to Tobago, where the governor, having a feeble garrison of only a couple of hundred sailors, wisely surrendered without making any attempt at resistance. Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice followed in rapid succession. Indeed, they were only too glad to come once more under British control, as the colonists were more in sympathy with John Bull than with Johnny Crapaud.

The *Gryphon* continued to form part of the conquering fleet, and Dick was in a chronic state of admiration and delight. The smooth sailing over these azure summer seas; the stately advances upon island after island glittering like emeralds in a setting of lapis lazuli and turkois; the delightful uncertainty as to whether the colony would fight or surrender, which went far to compensate for the missing of the excitement of another fight; and then, besides all this, the fun there was to be had in exploring the captured territory, the interesting things there were to be seen, delicious fruits that were to be tasted—verily it was the jolliest kind of a holiday. Everybody, from the admiral down, was in the best of good-humour, and as much liberty was allowed as was consistent with a due maintenance of discipline.

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In the very midst of this triumphal progress orders came to the *Gryphon* from the admiral that made everybody on board look glum. It was to the effect that he wished to send certain important despatches to Antigua, and the frigate being the best sailer in the fleet, he had selected her for the purpose.

Accordingly that afternoon she turned her bow northward, and bowled merrily along before a favouring breeze—Captain Fitewell and his merry men grumbling vigorously at having to leave so pleasant a picnic simply to carry despatches. They had no idea what a lively time was just ahead of them, and what an important service they were shortly to render.

The month of September had come, and with it some slight mitigation of the intense heat which Dick had found the only cloud upon his enjoyment of the island paradise. It was his custom to spend much of his time when off duty up in the main-top, with Tenderly as his companion, and to sweep the seas with a fine spy-glass given him by an uncle previously to his leaving England. There was plenty of breeze up there, and a grand view of the watery world around. One morning, while thus engaged, his keen eyes made out something far away on the weather-

bow that caused him to shout down to the deck at the top of his voice,—

“Sail, ho! on the weather-bow!”

Captain Fitewell happened to have just come up on the quarter-deck, and hearing Dick’s hail, called eagerly back to him,—

“Can you make her out? What is she?”

“Yes, sir,” answered Dick; “a schooner, sir.” Then as the speedy frigate continued onward, he called out again,—

“One—two—three! Why, there’s a whole fleet of them, sir, making right across our bows.”

Instantly all was bustle and excitement on board the *Gryphon*. Dick’s announcement was most welcome—a lively chase being just the thing everybody hankered after. A cloud of canvas quickly spread along the yards, the decks were cleared for action, the guns shotted, and boats made ready for boarding, while the good ship fairly snored through the white-caps in her eagerness to overtake the schooners—Dick dancing with joy in the main-top at prospect of a brush with the enemy.

It was soon evident that the approach of the frigate had been perceived, and had created alarm among the schooners. They cracked on every stitch of canvas,

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and edging to the eastward did their best to show their pursuers a clean pair of heels.

"They've made out thirteen of them," said Captain Fitewell to the first lieutenant, in a puzzled tone. "I am at a loss to understand what such a fleet of schooners together can mean. They can't be privateers, for birds of that feather don't usually flock together in that way, and it's equally certain they're not merchantmen."

"Whatever they are, sir, they'll soon have a chance of explaining," answered the lieutenant, "for we're overhauling them fast, you see."

They were indeed overhauling them fast. If the wind only held for another half-hour, they would be right in the midst of the covey. Much to their satisfaction, the wind did hold, bringing the frigate down upon the schooners in great style.

"Now for some fun," cried Dick, as the crew beat to quarters, and the *Gryphon* ran between the two nearest schooners.

Captain Fitewell hailed one, and Lieutenant McKinsty the other; but no response came from either, their crews crowding down behind the low bulwarks as though they expected a storm of shot to burst upon them.

"Heave to instantly, or I'll sink you," roared the captain, incensed at receiving no reply.

Still no answer came, and the order rang out to give them each a broadside. The roar of twelve twenty-four pound carronades stunned the air, followed close by the crash of splintering wood and the cries of wounded men. The schooners, damaged beyond all chance of escape, fell away from the wind, and lay to in the trough of the sea, all their trim beauty vanished in a moment.

"About ship, and send boats on board," shouted Captain Fitewell.

The order was obeyed with wonderful celerity, and no sooner were the boats safely lowered than the frigate stood on her course again in pursuit of the other schooners.

Dick was in the bow of one of the boats; but no attempt was made to repel the boarders, and he did not regret finding that his tongue was the only weapon he needed to use.

The secret of the fleet of schooners soon revealed itself. They had been sent out by the governor of Guadeloupe for the purpose of destroying the dock-yard at English Harbour, Antigua; and as this important station was then insufficiently garrisoned, the

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Frenchman's clever scheme would no doubt have been crowned with brilliant success, but for the timely appearance of the *Gryphon*, whereby three of the schooners were captured, and the rest sent flying back in dismay to Guadeloupe.

Dick was warmly complimented by Captain Fite-well for having been the first to report the schooners, and Lieutenant M'Kinstry's interest in him deepened as he found him giving increasing promise of proving an ornament to the British navy.

CHAPTER IV.

A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE.

THE Antigua despatches having been duly delivered, the frigate then sailed for Kingston. Jamaica, there to await further orders, which, in view of the activity shown by the French, were sure to be not long in coming.

The island was at this time enjoying the very height of prosperity that unhappily has long since departed from it, and the harbour of Kingston, where the whole navy of England could ride commodiously, was a very forest of masts. Dick looked about him with intense interest, for he had heard much about the famous station from his shipmates, and felt eager to make its acquaintance.

The harbour seemed to him the finest he had ever entered. It was an almost impregnable haven for commerce, the mouth being guarded by a labyrinth of shoals and reefs amongst which the channels were so

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narrow and intricate as to be easily blocked, and the entrance at Port Royal defended by very strong works, the guns ranging the whole way across, while a little further on the attacking ships would be exposed to a cross fire from the Apostles' Battery. But even if the enemy's ships should succeed in overcoming these obstacles, before they could pass the narrows and reach the anchorage they would inevitably be blown out of the water by the large cannon on Fort Augustin ; so that the good people had reason to go unconcernedly about their business and sleep soundly in their beds, even though the " Corsican Ogre " was known to entertain most disturbing designs upon them and their stronghold.

They had no lack of business to look after, too ; for the whole of the trade of Terra Firma from Porto Cavello down to Chargres the greater part of the commerce of Cuba and San Domingo, and even that of Lima and San Blas and other ports of the Pacific, carried on across the Isthmus of Darien, centred at Kingston—the result being that a stream of gold and silver to the extent of millions of pounds sterling per annum flowed through the city into England in return for another of British manufactures, and the fortunate Kingstonians took toll from both, to their great economical advantage.

At the first opportunity Dick obtained leave to go on shore for both himself and Tenderly, and so one fine morning they set off "to do the town." They found the hot sandy streets full of bustle. Long lines of drays were conveying goods from the wharfs to the stores, and from the stores to the Spanish posadas. The merchants of the place, active, sharp-looking men, were seen grouped under the piazzas, chaffering with their Spanish customers, or perched on top of the bales and boxes just landed, awaiting the coming of the dons with their trains of negro servants and nockets full of gold coin.

The town itself looked very attractive with its low, spacious houses, surrounded by broad piazzas, gaily painted white and green, and formed by the roofs projecting beyond the brick walls. On the ground floor these piazzas were open, and where the houses adjoined each other they formed a continuous covered way that afforded a most grateful shelter from the sun. On the upper floor, however, the balconies were shut in by movable blinds called "jalousies," like large-bladed Venetian blinds, fixed on frames with glazed sashes at intervals to admit light in bad weather, when the blinds had to be closed.

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on its own piece of ground, having a garden filled with vines, fruit-trees, palms, and cocoa-nut trees in front, and a court of negroes' quarters and offices behind, with a draw-well in the centre, generally overshadowed by a magnificent wild tamarind—the whole effect being very picturesque, and having an air of exceeding comfort.

The two boys, undeterred by the blazing sun, strolled along through street after street, their eyes taking in the novel and entertaining panorama passing before them, and their tongues hard at work exchanging comments upon it. They were in the best of humour to enjoy everything, for they had not yet got entirely used to their uniform, and felt themselves to be young persons of considerable importance, and fairly entitled to the respectful interest of the people of the place.

"I wish we knew some of the folks about here," said Dick. "Those gardens look so tempting. I wonder what they'd think of us if we were to ask permission to pick a little fruit. There seems to be a great deal more of it than they can use, for see, it is rotting on the ground."

"That's so," responded Arthur, who had a keen appreciation of good things, and whose mouth had

been watering for some of the delicious fruit which abounded on either hand. "Suppose we try. They can't do worse than say no, any way."

Screwing his courage to the asking-point, Dick, followed close by Arthur, marched up the path to the door of one of the houses, where the fruit seemed to be in greatest abundance, and gave a very uncertain sort of knock. There was no response, and his resolution having suddenly deserted him, he was about to turn tail and make for the street again, when around the corner of the piazza there appeared a young lady, looking very charming in a white muslin dress and broad leghorn hat, who quietly came up with a pleasant smile, and asked,—

"Were you knocking without getting any answer?"

"Well—er—yes, ma'am," murmured Dick, blushing furiously, and looking as guilty as if he had been caught helping himself to the fruit without first asking permission.

"And was it Mr. Wilson you wanted to see?" inquired the young lady, evidently anxious to help him out of his embarrassment.

"Er—er—no, ma'am," replied Dick, and then realizing that the sooner their presence at the door was explained the better, he blurted out with sudden

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energy, "The fact is, ma'am, we were passing by your garden, and seeing such a lot of fruit, it made our mouths water, and we thought we'd just ask if we might have a taste."

The smile upon the young lady's face had been growing broader as the true meaning of the boys' action dawned upon her, and entering heartily into the spirit of the affair, she said, in a tone of unmistakable warmth,—

"Well, I'm very glad you honoured us with the request, and if you'll just come with me now, you may pick and eat to your hearts' content."

Quite restored to his wonted self-possession by this courteous speech, Dick touched his cap with a hearty "Thank you, ma'am; I'm sure you're very kind," and gave Tenderly a triumphant look, as though to say, "See how well I've managed it; now for a good blow-out."

"What we have in front of the house is only for show," said their smiling hostess; "but if you'll come with me I'll take you to our back garden, of which I don't mind confessing we're rather proud, for we've tried with some success to have in it nearly every kind of fruit that grows on the island."

Mentally felicitating themselves upon their wonder-

ful good fortune, the two midshipmen took their places on either side of the young lady as she proceeded around the corner of the house, and along a flagged pathway between two hedges, brilliant with convolvuli and passion flowers, into a magnificent garden, the like of which they had never seen in their lives before.

Here mingled in apparent confusion, but really according to careful method flourished in prodigal profusion, sufficient tropical fruits to constitute a veritable Garden of Eden. The orange trees were heavy with globes in all stages of progression, from dull green to dropping ripe; and side by side with them stood the citron, lemon, and lime trees, each bearing their own balls of juicy richness. Then there were the stately glossy-leaved star-apple, the golden shaddock, and grape fruit, with their slender branches bending under their ponderous yellow burden; the cashew, with its apple like those of the cities of the plain, fair to look at but acrid to the taste, to which the far-famed nut was appended like a bud; the avocado, with its enormous pear; the bread-fruit, with leaf big enough for an apron, and the fruit for all the world in size and shape like a blackamoor's head: while lying closer to the ground were the green, fresh, dew-spangled plantain, always cool in the hottest of

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days; the cocoa root, the yam, and the granadilla, with their long vines twining up the neighbouring trees and shrubs like hop tendrils; the pine-apple, growing into the hedgerows and forming part of them; the custard-apple, with its russet bags of cold pudding: and then towering aloft over all were the tall, graceful cocoa-nut, the majestic palm, and the splendid wild cotton-tree.

Dick drew a deep breath of wonder and admiration as his eyes took in the details of this glorious garden.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed, "I wish my mother could see this."

The young lady turned upon him a quick glance of sympathy.

"Your mother?" she queried, in a tone of interest. "She's in England, I suppose. You can't have gardens like this there, can you?"

"Yes, she is in Kent," answered Dick, with a half-smothered sigh; and then it suddenly occurring to him that it was full time he introduced himself to his fair entertainer, he went on in a somewhat bashful way, "I ought to tell you our names, ma'am. This is Arthur Tenderly, and I am Richard Holland, midshipmen of H.M.S. *Gryphon*."

"Mr. Holland and Mr. Tenderly, I am very glad to

make your acquaintance in this informal way," was the smiling response; "and after you have put our garden to the proof, I am going to present you to my mother, who has a great liking for naval officers, and is always glad to welcome them to the house. But first of all, I must tell you that my name is Miss Wilson. And now, won't you try which of the trees has the nicest fruit on it?"

The boys promptly accepted the challenge, and during the next half-hour amidst much laughter and chatter they managed to sample nearly every fruit-bearing tree and vine in the garden, not calling halt until the increasing tightness of their waist-bands warned them that they had about reached the limit of their stowage capacity for the present.

"It's really very kind of you, Miss Wilson," said Dick, "and I'm sure we're ever so much obliged to you—aren't we, Arthur?" turning to his companion, who bowed an emphatic assent. "But I think we've stayed long enough now, and ought to be getting under way again."

"Indeed, you're not going until mother has seen you," responded Miss Wilson. "She would give me a big scolding if I let you run away in that manner. You must come into the house with me now."

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Had he consulted his own inclinations, Dick would have begged to be excused; but after the very great kindness with which their intrusion had been treated, he felt that it would be showing a very ill grace to refuse Miss Wilson's request, so he put himself in her hands, to do as she wished.

Conducting the two boys into the drawing-room, which they found most gratefully dim and cool after the glare and heat of the garden, she went off into another part of the house, promising to return in a few minutes. For the first time since the beginning of their adventure they had a chance to compare notes.

"My eye!" exclaimed Dick, thrusting himself more deeply into the yielding cushions of a luxurious satin-covered lounge, "but we made a great shot this time, didn't we? I hope the old lady will take the same view of our impertinence as her daughter."

"I hope so too," answered Tenderly. "But she can't very well be anything but civil, now that we're in her house by her daughter's invitation, can she?"

Tenderly was of a nervous, apprehensive temperament, and was always looking about for comfort and reassurance when in any situation of real or apparent difficulty.

"Of course not," responded Dick, with prompt decision. "She'll be civil enough, without a doubt. What I'm wondering is whether she'll take to us as kindly as the daughter did. It would be jolly to have some friends here, wouldn't it?"

Further speculation on the subject was here brought to an end by the sound of footsteps coming along the hall, and presently Miss Wilson re-entered the room with another lady at her side to whom her resemblance was so striking that it did not take very keen eyes to decide their relationship.

"Mother, this is Mr. Holland and this is Mr. Tenderly," said she as the midshipmen rose to their feet and made the best bow they could manage.

"I'm very glad indeed to see you both," said Mrs. Wilson, in a tone of great cordiality. "Pray, be seated again and rest yourselves."

Thoroughly reassured by her manner no less than her words, the boys resumed their seats, and soon found themselves talking away to the ladies as freely as though they were friends of long standing.

Mrs. Wilson was the very picture of comeliness and geniality, her buxom form, bright fresh face, sparkling eyes, and snowy hair giving her a very attractive appearance, which was increased by an expression of

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sincere kindness that was habitual with her. She was a woman whose happiness lay chiefly in making others happy, and as she smiled upon Dick he thought her next to his own mother the most beautiful woman he had ever known.

"May I ask, Mr. Holland," said she, after they had been talking together a little, "if you are any relation to Captain Holland who was on this station some years ago in the *Firefly*?"

"I am his son," replied Dick simply, colouring up at the thought of his father, who was very dear to him, little as they had seen of one another until the latter retired from active service.

"You're his son!" cried Mrs. Wilson. "Then you are doubly welcome to this house, for we knew your father well, and many an evening he spent with us. How glad I am that you found us out in this curious way! It seems quite providential. You must feel perfectly at home here, and come and see us as often as possible."

The tears came into Dick's eyes at Mrs. Wilson's kind speech. She had known his father well, and he had often been in her house. How strange it all seemed, and how pleasant for the lad, who often felt desperately homesick still in spite of his innate fond-

ness for the sea and firm resolution to stick to it until he had risen to the rank of admiral or given his life in fulfilment of duty. He found it difficult to say anything in reply to Mrs. Wilson, who, with womanly instinct understanding his embarrassment, made a diversion by asking him a number of questions about his ship, and how he liked the life on board, and so forth, until Dick felt perfectly at ease again.

She was very cordial in her invitation for them both to remain to dinner, but this they were not able to do, as their leave was up at one o'clock; so, after promising to call the very next time they were on shore again, they took their departure, in high spirits at the surprising success of their bold invasion of the tempting fruit-garden.

"We came out of that scrape a good deal better than I ever imagined we would, I tell you," said Dick, as they walked rapidly back to the landing, where they would meet the boat to take them off to their ship; "and what's more, I'm going to take Mrs. Wilson at her word, and pay her as many visits as I can while the *Gryphon's* in port. She seems just like a mother to me already."

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Dick?" asked Tenderly, with a pleading note in his voice.

"Of course I will, Arthur," responded Dick, in quite a patronizing tone; for, to tell the truth, he felt a bit puffed up concerning his new friends, and intended to boast somewhat about them when he got back to the gun-room.

They were just in time to catch the boat, and to report themselves to the first lieutenant as "Come aboard, sir," before all hands were piped to dinner; and thereafter they were on duty for the rest of the day.

At the first opportunity Dick made inquiry about the Wilsons of those who were familiar with Kingston, and was delighted to learn that Mr. Wilson was one of the most important men in the place, and that he was esteemed very fortunate in having the *entrée* to his house.

When Bulstrode heard of this adventure and its pleasing termination, he evidently took it very much amiss, and had something to say in a sneering tone about "that young puppy Dicky-bird, who was always keeping such a good look-out for number one, but would find himself on the wrong tack some fine day."

The fact of the matter was, Bulstrode did his very

best to make Dick's lot as hard as possible. He envied the lad because of the manifest superiority he displayed in both mental and physical exercises, and hated him for his popularity with his senior officers, particularly the first lieutenant, who showed Dick as much favour as was consistent with good discipline.

In point of age Bulstrode was the senior midshipman, but owing in part to natural slowness of mind, and in part to his sullen, slothful disposition, he was far behind others who were several years younger as regards knowledge of duties and drill. Dull as he was, he had soon recognized in Dick a shipmate whose rivalry would inevitably become dangerous before long, and his one aim was to try to make the *Gryphon* so uncomfortable for him that he would take an early opportunity of getting changed into some other ship.

Now of such a thing Dick had not the slightest notion. He thought the *Gryphon* a splendid ship, and in fact she was one of the finest frigates of the British navy at the time; he firmly believed Captain Fitewell to be one of the most distinguished officers afloat; and in Lieutenant M'Kinstry he saw the beau-ideal of a sailor, whose example he could not imitate too closely.

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'Tis true the atmosphere of the gun-room could hardly be called congenial. Here Bulstrode held a kind of leadership by dint of sheer brute force more than anything else, for he certainly had neither friends nor admirers, although his plentiful supply of pocket-money always insured him a number of satellites.

Coarse and profane as Bulstrode had been before Dick's appearance, he was much worse thereafter. He could see that Dick detested oaths and loathed lewd speeches and stories, so he inflicted as many upon him as he could—the result being that poor Dick was practically driven out of the room, except at meal-time or when his tormentor was on watch, and but for the companionship of Arthur Tenderly would often have been desperately lonely.

As it was, the two of them spent many hours together in the main-top studying their lessons or reading such books as the officers would lend them; and thus their friendship grew steadfastly stronger, Tenderly being greatly benefited by Dick's sturdy independence, the spirit of which he strove eagerly to catch and share.

Of course by complaining to the first lieutenant Dick might have had the hardships of his lot materi-

ally mitigated, but rather than turn "tattle-tale," he would have endured five times the persecution. In the school in which he had been brought up, the boy who "peached" put himself in much the same category as the spy in time of war. He became a pariah, and was tabooed by all his playmates, never again to be restored to their confidence. Trying as the situation was, Dick determined to bear it in silence, trusting that Providence would in due time make the rough places smooth.

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CHAPTER V

A TRIP INLAND.

THE stay of the *Gryphon* at Kingston was a happy time with Dick. While in port, the duties of a junior midshipman are not heavy; and he was able to obtain leave to go on shore nearly every day. When he did land, it was not often that he did not steer straight for Mrs. Wilson's, where he was sure to be warmly welcomed, and made to share in any programme of pleasure the family had arranged. It was thus that he came to accompany them when together with some friends they paid a visit to one of Mr. Wilson's plantations in the interior, whose sugar product yielded a material portion of his income.

For such an expedition Dick had to obtain special leave, as he would be absent the greater part of a week, but this was managed easily enough through the kind offices of Lieutenant M'Kinstry; and on a

beautiful Wednesday morning Dick presented himself at Mr. Wilson's door, accompanied by a sailor boy bearing a bag, in which he had packed his necessary belongings.

He was in high spirits at the prospects of the trip, and amused the older folk very much by his merry speeches and evident difficulty in restraining himself from cutting all sorts of capers as the party was assembling.

They were to ride to their destination, and fortunately for Dick, his early education had included a knowledge of the saddle which did not ordinarily fall to the lot of sailors; for close by his home in Kent stood The Willows, the country seat of Sir William Maitland, and with the baronet's eldest son Dick had been on terms of the greatest intimacy. There were several ponies in the stables of The Willows, one of which was always at Dick's disposal; and in company with Harold Maitland he had explored every highway and by-way for miles around, as well as taken many a run across country at the tail of the galloping regiment of fox-hunters.

When the horses were brought round to the front, Dick was allotted a sturdy little gray that looked just like his weight; and without waiting for the

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others, he vaulted into the saddle and began caracol-
ing about in fine style.

"Why, Master Holland," said Mr. Wilson, watch-
ing him with an expression of mingled amusement
and admiration, "where did you learn to ride like
that?"

"At home, sir," answered Dick, managing quite
cleverly to touch his cap with one hand while he
reined in his steed with the other. "I used to ride
a great deal then with Hal Maitland."

"Well, you've evidently made yourself master of
the noble art of horsemanship," said Mr. Wilson ;
"and I'm very glad now that I have given you the
little gray, for he is as full of spirit as yourself, and
you ought to get along together finely."

As if the horse understood this speech, it set up a
prancing and curveting that might have disconcerted
a rider with a less firm seat than Dick, but he was
quite equal to the occasion, and easily controlled his
lively mount ; while the others one by one got into
their saddles and made ready to start.

At last they got off amid a shower of "good-byes"
and good wishes, the party being made up as fol-
lows:—Mr. Wilson, mounted upon a sturdy black
cob of dignified demeanour befitting its rider ; Miss

Wilson, controlling with light but firm hand a beautiful white mare; Dick, dancing about on his lively gray; and a couple of the younger members of the neighbouring family, Alice and Frank Romaine—the one about the same age as Miss Wilson, and the other a contemporary of Dick's, each mounted upon their own pony, and ready for a good time. Mrs. Wilson remained at home, as the long ride would be too severe a tax upon her strength.

The day was all that could be desired, and the little cavalcade made good progress along the white dusty road, which wound its way through dense masses of tropical foliage that admirably served to shield the traveller from the glare of the sun. It was Dick's first ride in the West Indies, and his quick, observant eyes found a thousand things that called forth his wonder and delight. Now it would be a beautiful bird, flashing in a frightened way across the road, the sun's rays making it seem a bit of living rainbow; and again it would be a huge, hideous lizard, basking luxuriously in the heat, and too lazy to move as they trotted noisily by.

Then the wonders of foliage, fruit, and flower called forth his constant admiration, and he was every minute asking Miss Wilson, at whose side he

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rode, to tell him the name of the different trees and plants. This was not out of mere curiosity, but from a genuine thirst for knowledge. No boy could be more eager to learn than Dick. Everything about him was so novel to him that he was full of eagerness to get rid of his ignorance as rapidly as possible; and he had no false pride about asking questions. He was quite willing for his friends to know the extent of his unfamiliarity with things about him, just in order that they might instruct him.

Mr. Wilson, finding him so interested in his surroundings, pointed out the various estates they passed, telling him something about the history of each and of their owners; for he was a man of vast information, having spent more than a quarter of a century on the island and had many striking stories to tell concerning his fellow-residents.

The farther behind they left the city the fewer grew the residences, and when they reached the base of the Liguanea Mountains, which towered nearly five thousand feet into the air, they were practically in the wilderness.

"How would you like to own a plantation here and go into sugar-raising, Dick?" asked Mr. Wilson, with a quizzical look, as they slowly ascended a steep slope.

Dick hesitated a little before replying. To his mind there was nothing to be compared with a sailor's life, and he saw no attraction whatever in being bound down to any shore-going occupation. But he shrank from saying this too bluntly, lest it might offend his kind host, whose interests were altogether connected with *terra firma*.

"I really don't know, sir," he said slowly. "I never tried it, you know; and I've always thought of the sea because my father was a sailor, I suppose."

"Answered like a diplomat," laughed Mr. Wilson. "It was hardly a fair question to ask you; but you've parried it most skilfully. Of course you prefer the sea, especially in these exciting times, and could not bear the thought of settling down to any such humdrum business as sugar-planting."

"That's about it, sir," assented Dick. "I like excitement, and the more I get of it the better I like it."

"Well, my boy," returned Mr. Wilson, a serious expression clouding his face, "it's more than likely that you will have all the excitement you can wish for during the next few years. Napoleon is determined to make himself master of the West Indies. Nothing less than the undisputed possession of the whole chain, not even excepting Cuba, will satisfy

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his ambition; and I fear there will be much precious blood shed and many fine vessels destroyed before the issue is finally settled—not that I have any doubt as to the result. Britain will win in the end as sure as there is a wise Providence overruling human affairs; but it may be at terrible cost. God grant that you, Dick, may pass safely through the perils you will inevitably have to face.”

He was silent for a moment, as though thinking deeply. Then glancing up at the sky, he exclaimed suddenly,—

“Hollo! I don’t like the look of that cloud. I’m afraid there’s a rain-storm coming on. We must look out for shelter.”

So saying he put spurs to his horse, and bidding the others whip up theirs, he set off along the road at a hard canter, the whole party following close behind.

The road wound around a precipitous spur of the mountains, and on looking up along the ridge a lowering mass of clouds could be seen, which gradually spread out, and began to roll downhill upon the tree-tops; while along the lower edge hung a fringe of dark vapour, that shifted about and shot out and shortened like streamers.

"Ride! ride!" shouted Mr. Wilson, looking back over his shoulder as he pressed his horse into a full gallop; "we've not a moment to lose."

At top speed they dashed along the road, the dust rising in great clouds, and whirling in their faces as the wind caught it and carried it upward. Already the sound of the rain falling in torrents higher up the mountain-side could be heard.

"Quicker! quicker!" cried Mr. Wilson, the foam falling from his horse's mouth as he urged it onward. Then with a glad shout of "Here we are!" he reined up short before a break in the forest wall into which he turned, and another quick run of not more than a hundred yards brought him to a large building, the big doors of which happily stood wide open. Without waiting to dismount, he headed straight in, the rest doing likewise; and just as the rain came down with true tropical violence, they all found themselves safely sheltered in a huge barn or storehouse, with the position of which Mr. Wilson was fortunately familiar.

"Aha!" he exclaimed, in a tone of great relief, as he dismounted from his panting steed. "That was a very close shave. Just look what we escaped."

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be called, for it was indeed more like a water-spout—began to fall from the lower edge of the black cloud with a strong, rushing noise, that increased as it approached to a loud roar worthy of a first-class waterfall. As it came along it seemed to devour the rocks and trees, for they disappeared behind the watery screen the instant it reached them. Down came the deluge in this fashion for the space of nearly fifteen minutes, the well-protected party watching it with bated breath and grateful hearts at having so fortunately escaped not merely the drenching but the danger of a stroke of lightning, for a terrible thunder-storm accompanied the rain.

"Do you often have such storms as this, Mr. Wilson?" asked Dick, bethinking himself that it would not be very pleasant to be out in an open boat off an exposed coast in the midst of so furious a turmoil of the elements.

"Not very often, Dick, I am happy to say," replied Mr. Wilson; "and when they do come they don't last long. See, this one is clearing off already. We will soon be able to resume our journey."

Sure enough the rain was coming down less violently, and the darkness was giving way. Almost as rapidly as it had gathered the storm cleared off

again; and after waiting a while to allow the drippings from the trees to cease, Mr. Wilson gave orders to remount, and in a few minutes they were all in their saddles.

"We will have to ride more carefully now," said their leader, "for no doubt the road has suffered a good deal of damage."

The road had been gullied a good deal wherever it dipped, and there were many pools still standing upon it, so that the pace of the riders was a much slower one than before the storm. But this did not matter very seriously, as ample time had been allowed for the trip; and the sun was still high in the now cloudless sky when Mr. Wilson said,—

"Ah, here we are, and I'm right glad of it, for I'm beginning to feel decidedly hungry, as I've no doubt you all are, eh?"

"I think we're all quite ready to enjoy our dinner," responded Miss Romaine, with a laugh. "For my part, I never felt hungrier in my life."

"Well, my dear, unless my orders miscarried, I believe I can promise you a fairly respectable repast, for old Nancy has by no means yet forgotten her culinary skill;" and Mr. Wilson smacked his lips in a serio-comic way.

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They had turned off the main road, and were proceeding along an avenue lined with lofty trees, beyond which the fields of sugar-cane stretched away in great billows of gold and green. Presently they came to an open space carpeted with thick grass, at the farther end of which stood a comfortable-looking house.

"There you are, Dick," said Mr. Wilson, pointing towards the house. "That's Mangrove Cottage; and this," giving a semicircular sweep with his hand, "is the best-yielding sugar-plantation I have."

Dick looked about him with deep interest; and as the thought of this lovely place—being only one of several owned by his host—came into his mind, a doubt as to whether, after all, it was not better to be a planter than even the captain of as fine a frigate as the *Gryphon* made its appearance, only, however, to be summarily dismissed again.

In response to Mr. Wilson's commanding call of "Boys, boys!" half-a-dozen negroes came running around the corner of the house with beaming faces of welcome; for their owner was one of the kindest masters on the island, and his slaves regarded him as a friend to be loved, and not as a tyrant to be feared.

Dick had come to the West Indies with some pre-

conceived ideas about slavery, based mainly upon the stories his father had brought home concerning atrocities witnessed by himself; but what he witnessed at the Mangroves gave him an altogether new conception of the institution. There were in all nearly a hundred slaves upon the estate, and a heartier, healthier, happier lot of negroes he had never seen anywhere. They had their quarters at the back of the house, with the space of a couple of hundred yards between them; and their homes were low, broad, comfortable huts, having walls of basket-work plastered over with clay, and thick roofs thatched with palm leaves, while the floors were of baked clay, firm, smooth, and dry.

After a refreshing luncheon, which all enjoyed with great relish, Mr. Wilson carried off his guests to make a tour of the estate, and was very entertaining as he took them about from point to point of interest. It seemed as though every kind of fruit known to the tropics flourished within the boundaries of the property; and the young folks had a grand time trying the respective merits of avocados, granadillas, custard-apples, oranges, pine-apples, and a dozen other kinds of nature's delicious dainties.

They concluded their tour with a visit to the negro

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quarters, which they reached just as the blowing of a large conch shell at the overseer's house called the field-gangs to dinner. With a quickness that showed how eagerly they had been awaiting the summons, the field-hands came along the paths, dancing, shouting, and playing all kinds of practical jokes upon one another in their delighted anticipation of a good dinner, with a full hour and a half to enjoy it. They looked the very picture of comfort and content—the men being well clad in osnaburg shirts and trousers, and the women in baize petticoats and osnaburg waists, with a neat printed calico gown over all.

So utterly different was the picture from what Dick had imagined it would be, that he could not restrain an exclamation of surprise that aroused Mr. Wilson's curiosity and led to a number of questions, in answering which Dick frankly explained his state of mind.

"And so you thought every slave-holder was a sort of ogre, did you, Dick?" asked Mr. Wilson, with a smile that showed he felt no resentment. "Well, I don't wonder at it either, in view of the things they say about us at home; and I'm very glad that I've had the chance of proving to you that we planters are not quite so black as some people paint us. You

see how contented my slaves look. Well, I never allow the whip to be used on any of my estates, and the consequence is that my slaves are so eager to stay with me that if any of them are shirking work, or behaving badly in any other way, I have only to threaten to sell them to a neighbour of mine, who is notorious for using his people with great severity, in order to bring them back to good conduct. At the same time, Dick," he went on, "I may tell you frankly that I do not think slavery a blessing by any means, and will be very glad, for one, when it is found possible to do away with it altogether."

"That will be a splendid thing, won't it, sir?" exclaimed Dick, with glowing face.

"I'm not quite so sure about it, Dick," replied Mr. Wilson. "Perhaps after the slaves get their freedom they won't know how to make a good use of it. But of course that's not our business, so long as it's right that they should be free."

They had got back to the house by this time, and the heat of the sun being very great they went indoors for a siesta, for which everybody was quite ready, having made such an early start in the morning.

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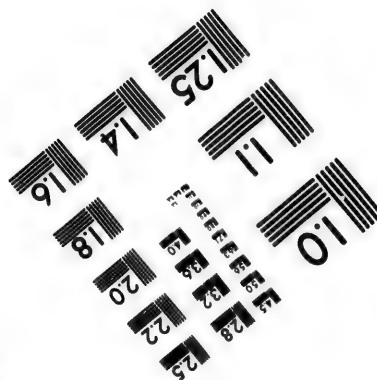
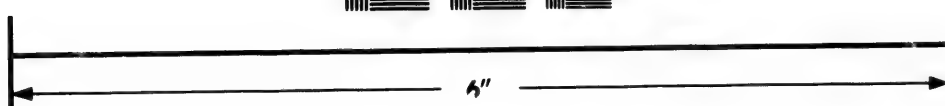
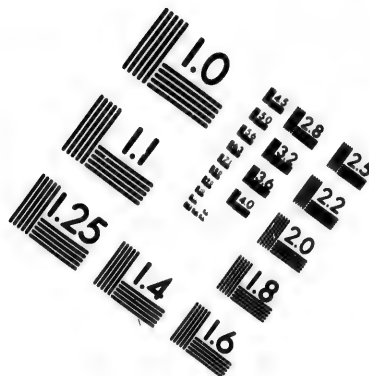
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side of the piazza, awaiting the summons to dinner, which presently came booming out from the big cool dining-room as the cook proudly banged a gong upon the mantelpiece. In high good-humour they took their places, and amid much talk and laughter showed a keen appreciation of the good things which had been abundantly provided.

By the time the meal had been disposed of in a leisurely fashion, and Mr. Wilson had converted a couple of good cigars into smoke and ashes, it was too dark to go about; so the lamps were lit, and Mr. Wilson sent for some of the best singers in the "quarters" to come up and entertain his guests with their quaint and sweet melodies.

In response to the order a dozen or more of both sexes presently made their appearance, all dressed in their holiday garments, and looking radiant at being honoured by a command to appear before "massa and his folks." Then followed a programme of songs and dances that hugely pleased Dick, to whom it was more novel than to any of the others. Although necessarily under considerable restraint from the presence of so many "buccra folk," still there was enough wildness about both the music and the dancing to make them very striking to the English boy, who





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gave such close attention that the others were inclined to poke fun at him. But he took all their jokes good-humouredly, saying,—

“You may laugh at me if you like, but you know I’ve never seen anything just like this before, and I’m enjoying it immensely.”

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CHAPTER VI.

WORK AFTER PLAY.

THERE was abundant accommodation at the Mangroves for the whole party, and in good time they retired to their rooms, as they would have to make an early start the next morning. It was Dick's first experience of a night ashore in the tropics, and he had rather a disturbed time of it, for with the darkness came a chorus of noises the like of which he had never heard before. It was a combination of the buzzing, and chirping, and whistling, and croaking of numberless reptiles and insects on the earth, in the air, and in the water, each variety seeming to be striving to surpass the other in the vigour and persistency of its peculiar utterance; while as if to accentuate the performance, huge beetles, with bodies as big as a walnut, would every now and then come sailing in through his open window and go cruising around the room with a noise like a hum-

ming-top, banging against the walls at intervals in apparent endeavours to dash out their brains.

"Bless my heart, I wish the creatures would stop that row!" groaned Dick, who sorely wanted to get to sleep. "I think I'll shut the window, and see if that will be any better."

So saying, he sprang out of bed and started across the room. But hardly had he put his foot to the floor than it was seized in what felt like the grip of red-hot pincers, and before he could restrain himself he let out a shout of alarm that brought young Romaine rushing into the room, followed closely by Mr. Wilson, bearing a light in his hand. They found Dick sitting on the edge of the bed, and struggling manfully to release the big toe of his right foot from the grasp of a big land-crab that had clapper-clawed it with vicious energy, and now hung on like grim death.

"Oh ho, my boy!" laughed Mr. Wilson, reassured at finding the matter was not more serious, "is that what startled you? Well, we'll soon rid you of your new acquaintance who wants to be so unduly intimate."

Seizing a stick, Mr. Wilson thrust it into the crack of the crab's jaws and wrenched them open, releasing

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the captured toe; and then deftly snatching up the crustacean, he flung it out of the window.

"There, Dick," said he; "that disposes of the intruder. And now let us see how severely you're wounded."

Fortunately the bite was not a severe one, the first agony of it having been the worst; and having bound it up in a cooling bandage, Mr. Wilson bade Dick "good-night" again, with the hope that he would have no further disturbance. Thoroughly tired out by this time, Dick fell asleep almost as soon as his head touched his pillow, despite the grumblings of his big toe, and it was broad daylight before he awoke.

After an early breakfast the horses were brought to the door, and the party mounted for the homeward journey, which was accomplished without special incident before mid-day. The same afternoon, Dick, with many expressions of gratitude for the pleasure he had been afforded, returned to the *Gryphon*, where Tenderly greeted him as warmly as if he had been away for a whole month. The fact of the matter was, the poor boy felt utterly alone without Dick. He had no other friend on board the frigate, and in Dick's absence mooned about in a depressed way that

made the other midshipmen laugh at him all the more, but without any effect upon him.

He greatly enjoyed Dick's lively account of his experiences ashore, and said in such a longing tone, "O Dick, how I wish I had been with you!" that Dick promised him that he would certainly ask Mr. Wilson to take him if they ever went on such an expedition again.

The next day, however, there came word on board the *Gryphon* which meant that something more serious than pleasant trips ashore would have to be considered. All shore-going was stopped, messengers were sent to recall the officers already on leave, and the entire crew was kept busy getting the ship ready to sail at an hour's notice.

The reason for this bustle was presently made known. One of the first acts of the French after war with Britain had again broken out was to put into commission a number of privateers, swift-sailing schooners of comparatively small size, but capable of doing a vast deal of mischief to unprotected merchant vessels. These parts of the sea were in sore need of severe discipline, and the *Gryphon*, as one of the fleetest frigates on the station, had been selected to administer it.

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Captain Fitewell would much have preferred being sent after more important game; but he confided this to no one save his first lieutenant, and seemed as eager to get away as if he were realizing the desire of his heart.

As the result of lively stirring round, the frigate was in readiness to sail the following morning; and when the final orders came from the admiral, she threaded her way out of the harbour, and by mid-day was bowling along before a westerly breeze in the direction of Martinique.

Although sorry at being so suddenly separated from his new-found friends, to whom he had already become warmly attached, Dick was pleased at the prospect of his ship having something to do, and he looked forward with lively expectation to the chasing of the privateers. He had a cordial antipathy to the French—a large part, of course, inherited from his father; and he firmly believed that the crushing of the power of Buonaparte would be the greatest blessing that Britain could confer upon the civilized world. Hence he was full of eagerness to share in anything that would, however remotely, help towards that conclusion. He was far from being of a bloodthirsty disposition. He saw nothing attractive in war of

itself. But he had a high sense of duty, and cherished an inspiring conviction that if he were only faithful, and prompt to avail himself of the opportunities that presented themselves, he might contribute something to the result the ultimate certainty of which he never for a moment doubted.

The first day out from Kingston was a glorious one—the wind being just right, the sky unclouded, the heat not oppressive, and the *Gryphon* showing to the best advantage as she raced through the white caps that curled away from her fore-foot as if they were glad to make way for her. Dick and Tenderly not being on duty, climbed up to their favourite eyry in the main-top, and were snugly ensconced there enjoying a quiet talk together.

"I'm glad we're off again," said Dick, "even if it is only to chase privateers. It's not much fun staying in port, is it, Arthur?"

Arthur did not assent at all promptly or heartily. For his part he much preferred being in port. There was nothing martial in his spirit, and the less he got of active service the better he would be pleased.

"Why, Arthur," laughed Dick, looking at him curiously, "I really believe you'd rather stay in port."

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to you, although I wouldn't like any of the others to hear it," confessed Arthur, looking very shamefaced. "I'm not fond of fighting, and it's no use pretending that I am."

Dick felt a strong inclination to say something expressive of his contempt for such a point of view, but there was something so pathetic in Arthur's pale face that he kept it back, and in a moment was very glad that he did; for poor Tenderly, reading in his open countenance something of what was passing in his mind and dreading lest the words should come, put up his hands in a pleading way, saying,—

"Don't, Dick, please. I know you think me a contemptible coward. That's what all the other fellows call me. But please don't you do it too. You're the only one that shows me any kindness, and it would break my heart if you were to turn against me."

It gave Dick a curious feeling of superiority to have a companion older and taller than himself appeal to him thus.

"I wasn't going to call you a coward, Arthur," said he, putting his hand on the other's shoulder. "You can't help not liking the navy. You didn't choose it for yourself as I did, and it seems too bad

that you have to stay in it. But look here, Arthur : since you can't get out of it, you must only try and make the best of it. So you ought to pray to God to give you strength and courage."

"I do, Dick," murmured Arthur, with a half sob. "I pray like that every day, but somehow or other I don't seem to get any braver."

"But you will, Arthur, you will," with a confidence that sent a thrill of hope through his companion. "Just keep on praying and doing your best, and it'll all come right, see if it doesn't."

Dick had an unfaltering faith in Providence. The privilege of divine protection and guidance was as real to him as the discipline of the ship. On the fly-leaf in his Bible his mother had written in her dear firm hand, "Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass," and this precious text might be said to furnish the keynote of his life ; so that even though the problem Tenderly presented was by no means an easy one of solution, Dick entertained not the slightest scepticism about its right solution in due time.

As the day waned the weather indications grew unfavourable, and the sun set amid a turmoil of angry-looking clouds that betokened rough weather

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for the morrow. The promise, too, was amply fulfilled, for with the morning came a wild north-wester that tested the stanch frigate's sailing capacity to the utmost. When Dick turned out he found the cloud of canvas that had covered the yards the preceding day snugly stored, while under a close-reefed maintop-sail and reefed foresail, with top-gallant yards, and royal masts, and everything that could be struck with safety in war time, down on deck, the *Gryphon* was rolling and pitching furiously as she tore her way through the boiling sea.

What a splendid sight the noble ship presented as she drove onward before the gale with her clear black bends and bright white streak, the long tier of canvas on the main-deck, and the carronades on the quarter-deck and forecastle grinning through the ports in the black bulwarks, while the white hammocks, carefully covered by the hammock-cloths, crowned the defences fore and aft. Bravely she delved through the green surge, one minute rolling and rising on the curling white crest of a mountainous sea amidst a hissing snow-storm of spray, with her bright copper glancing from stem to stern, and her scanty white canvas swelling aloft, and twenty feet of her keel forward occasionally hove into the air,

clear out of the water, as if she had been a sea bird rushing to take wing; and the next, sinking almost out of sight into the trough between the gigantic billows.

This was the sort of thing that Dick heartily enjoyed, and as he stood his watch upon deck he enjoyed the plunging motion of the vessel, like a rider rejoicing in the springing of his steed beneath him as he gallops over an expanse of open common.

The north-wester blew steadily all that day, but moderated considerably during the night, so that the following morning more sail could be carried, and a straighter course set for Martinique. That afternoon a merchant vessel was sighted and boarded, from which the information was obtained that the famous French privateer schooner *L'Harmonie*, which had done more damage to British commerce than any other of her class, had just taken a prize into the harbour of Marin in the Bay of St. Ann, Martinique.

Captain Fitewell rubbed his hands with glee on getting this news.

"Aha!" said he; "if the information is correct, we've got the very rascal I'm most particularly anxious to capture snugly in a corner, out of which he won't get until we bring him."

"Do you propose to enter the harbour, sir?" inquired Lieutenant McKinsty; "they say it's pretty well defended."

"That's the very thing I do propose to do, lieutenant," replied the captain. "But of course not with the frigate. I will send the launches in under your command, and you may have as many sailors and marines as you think necessary."

Lieutenant McKinsty's face lit up at this. Such an undertaking was entirely to his mind; and thanking Captain Pitewell for intrusting it to him, he went off to begin the necessary preparations.

At daylight next morning the mountains of Martinique were seen looming up on the weather bow, and drawing rapidly nearer as the frigate bowed along before an eight-knot breeze. On board all was bustle and earnest preparation. The sailors were getting the boats ready to launch, and the marines were seeing to it that their muskets and swords were in the right condition. There was no lack of eager candidates for the attacking force: among either the officers or the men. After consultation with the captain, Lieutenant McKinsty decided that he would take sixty seamen and the same number of marines, and that the plan of attack would be for the former

in their boats to make for the privateer, while the latter were to endeavour to surprise, or in any event to storm Fort Dunkirk, a battery of nine guns on the starboard side of the harbour. Assisting Lieutenant M'Kinstry were Lieutenants Cole and Furber; the marines being in command of Lieutenants Beatie and Boyd.

Five of the largest launches were detailed for the service, twenty-five men to go in each; and as they were being made ready Dick found an opportunity to slip up to Lieutenant M'Kinstry, and ask in his most pleading tone,—

“May I go with you, sir?”

The big officer looked down at the little chap beside him, and being very much taken up with the work of getting ready, his first impulse was to give a quick refusal. But there was something so eager and hopeful in the boy's face that he had not the heart to disappoint him, and with a brusque “Oh, you may come along, I suppose, if you'll take good care of yourself,” he hastened off to give some further orders.

Shortly after this, Bulstrode, who was no less eager to be allowed to go, went up to the lieutenant when he happened to be put out at something that had

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gone amiss, and preferred the same request that Dick had made.

But he had hardly spoken when Lieutenant M'Kinstry snapped him up short.

"No," he said, with unmistakable emphasis; "I've enough midshipmen already."

In high ill-humour Bulstrode descended to the gun-room, and just as he entered he caught Dick's words,—

"Yes; I'm to go, Arthur. Mr. M'Kinstry gave me leave the moment I asked him."

This was like adding a handful of powder to the flame already burning in Bulstrode's bosom; and giving Dick a look of jealousy and hate, he blurted out in a sneering tone,—

"It pays to be a toady, doesn't it?"

False and unjust as the imputation was it made Dick's blood boil, and he was just about to retort in kind when there flashed across his mind a word of counsel his mother had given him.

"Don't fight with your tongue, Dick dear," she had said. "It's a two-edged sword without a hilt, and is apt to cut both ways."

With a heroic effort he closed his lips again, and, as though he had not heard, went on talking to Tenderly,

paying no heed to Bulstrode's grumbling, thickly strewn with profanity, which he kept up so long as Dick remained in the room.

As it was intended to take the French by surprise, the attack was arranged to be made at midnight, and accordingly about eleven o'clock the boats set off from the ship with muffled oars, the seamen in one group of four and the marines in another.

The night was admirably suited for the purpose in hand, being calm and clear but without moonlight. As the sailors who were to attempt the capture of the privateer had some three miles further up the harbour to go than the marines, whose business it was to prevent the French soldiers from massing on Marin Point, and thus cutting off the return of the seamen, they were allowed a good head start, in order that the assault upon the fort and the privateer might be as nearly as possible simultaneous.

Dick was in the foremost boat, sitting in the stern-sheets beside Lieutenant M'Kinstry, his heart beating like a trip-hammer, as with superb steadiness and almost absolute silence the launch slid through the smooth dark water, propelled by twelve stalwart oarsmen. Not a word was spoken, the lieutenant holding the tiller tight, and peering earnestly into the

mysterious gloom ahead, which might at any moment be lit up by the lightning-flash of musketry, or its silence split by the roar of cannon.

There was no pilot on board the boats. They had to make their way as best they might in the darkness, relying upon the skill of their commander, who, happily, had some knowledge of the harbour, having been there on a previous occasion.

He seemed as entirely at his ease as though his mission was a pleasant picnic instead of a most daring and dangerous undertaking. Dick could just make out his face in the uncertain light, and its manifest composure filled his heart with admiration.

"This is feeling one's way in the dark, isn't it, Dick?" said he, as they ran into the deep shadow made by a projecting point on the right hand of their course. "We're right into the harbour now, and will soon sight the privateer if my calculations are correct."

The oars rose and fell with unfaltering steadiness, although each stroke carried them into graver peril, and still the harbour was as silent as though no living being floated upon its placid bosom. A few scattered lights glimmered about the town, but they revealed nothing to either friend or foe.

"Oh! there she is," exclaimed the lieutenant under

his breath, pointing to the right. "Can you see her, Dick?"

Looking eagerly in the direction indicated, Dick could just discern, dimly outlined against the starlit sky, the two tall masts of the object of their expedition, their stout stays and heavy rigging looking as light as the filaments of a spider's web.

He drew a deep breath at the sight, and gathered himself together, for he fully realized into what danger they were going.

"I hope they won't see us, sir, until we're aboard," he whispered back.

"I hope they won't, Dick," replied Lieutenant M'Kinstry; "and I hope, too, that the marines are at the fort by this time."

That moment, as if the whispered words had been overheard, there came a sharp challenge from the deck of the privateer, to which the boats vouchsafed no answer save to quicken their pace. The next moment there was a flash, and the report of a musket rudely broke the stillness.

"Give way, men!" cried the lieutenant, springing to his feet and waving his cap like a baton; "give way, my hearties, with all your might."

CHAPTER VII.

IN ACTUAL SERVICE.

THROWING off all further attempt at surprise, the seamen in the launches gave a thrilling cheer as the rowers sent the heavy boats surging through the still water; in response to which there came a scattering volley of musketry from the privateer, as her men, most of whom had been suddenly aroused from their bunks, tumbled up on deck, and let fly without stopping to take aim.

Not a bullet touched the boats, although some of those on board involuntarily ducked their heads when the leaden messengers whistled by; and the only notice Lieutenant M'Kinstry took was to call to his men,—

“Give way again! Hit her up! We'll be aboard there before they can reload.”

Dick had by this time lost all sense of nervousness, and in its place had come a burning desire to be one

of the first to leap on the deck of the enemy. Standing up in the stern, with his cutlass in his right hand and his pistol in his left, he felt equal to facing any foe. Almost in a line the three big boats swept on to the attack, their oarsmen springing from their seats at every stroke, and making the stout ash blades bend like willow wands with the force of the stroke. They had got within twenty yards, and their commander was just about congratulating himself upon escaping a second hail of bullets, when the command to fire was heard from the privateer, and the next moment the darkness was lit up as if by a flash of lightning, and a series of sharp reports told that the French had been more prompt in reloading than was expected.

The aim this time was better also, for there came cries of pain from more than one boat, and the lieutenant felt constrained to cry out in a cheering tone,—

“Never mind that, my men; it’s their last volley. Into them now with all your might.”

The boats fairly leaped through the remaining space, and at almost the same moment all three crashed against the side of the *Harmonie*—the men in the bows springing up and over the bulwarks with the litheness of monkeys in spite of the efforts of the crew to repel them.



*"The men in the boats springing up and over the bulwarks
with the litheness of monkeys."*

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The others followed close upon their heels, and before the French could fairly realize it they had all obtained a footing upon the deck. Then ensued a hand-to-hand struggle in the darkness that was full of thrilling incidents. Once the assailants were fairly on board, they had the advantage over the assaulted that the latter had not yet fully recovered from their surprise at the attack when they had thought themselves so secure; and despite the gallant and determined efforts of their officers to organize them properly, they fell into hopeless confusion.

Nevertheless, individually they fought with great bravery and resolution; so much so, indeed, that there were moments when the result of the attack seemed to be somewhat in doubt. Much to Dick's delight, in the thick of the struggle there came an opportunity to justify the lieutenant in allowing him to go. He had followed Mr. M'Kinstry about wherever he went, taking his part in the struggle to the best of his ability, and presently he found himself braced against the butt of the mainmast while the battle raged fiercely in front of him. The lieutenant had just knocked over a Frenchman with a blow from the handle of his pistol, when a gigantic negro made for him, swinging a broadsword in his mighty grip.

"Look out, sir!" cried Dick, for the officer was unconscious of his danger; and at the same moment he sprang at his assailant with uplifted cutlass, striking him a sharp blow upon the arm just below the biceps.

Up to this moment the negro had not seen Dick, and the sudden attack so surprised him that he nearly dropped his sword; but quickly recovering himself, he roared out a horrid oath, and, disdaining the midshipman, made another furious stroke at the officer.

By this time, however, Lieutenant M'Kinstry was on his guard, and tremendous as the blow was, he cleverly parried it, and the next moment felled his opponent to the deck, where he lay stunned and powerless for further harm.

"Well done, my lad!" exclaimed Lieutenant M'Kinstry. "You saved my head that time, and I won't forget it, I promise you. Come on; they're giving way. We'll soon have them beaten."

And off he dashed into the midst of the *mêlée*, cheering on with his ringing cries of—

"Let them have it, my hearties. Hit hard and quick. They can't hold out much longer."

Nor was he mistaken. Taken by surprise as they

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had been, and allowed no time to recover their wits, the defence made by the crew of the privateer, while it did credit to their individual courage, could not long avail against the tremendous energy of the British, and within five minutes after the first seaman had reached the schooner's deck, she was in the complete possession of her daring assailants, at the cost on their part of only one man killed and five wounded.

By the time the prisoners, some twoscore in number, were duly secured and the roll called to see what had been the casualties, the early dawn was already dissipating the darkness of the night, warning the British that they had not a moment to lose if they would get their prize safely out of the harbour.

Sharp and quick were the lieutenant's orders, in obedience to which the rowers resumed their places in the boats, and towing-ropes being attached to the schooner, she presently began to move at good speed down the harbour.

The danger was not over yet by any means, for, even assuming that the marines had been as successful in storming Fort Dunkirk as the sailors had in boarding the privateer, there still remained Fort St. Ann on the port side of the harbour to be reckoned with; and as they had to pass within musket-shot, a well-

directed fire from its guns might compel them to retreat with empty hands, and perhaps with heavy loss.

"I'd like mightily to know what they're up to behind those walls," said the lieutenant to Dick, as once more they sat together in the stern of the leading launch. "They can blow us out of the water if they know how to use their guns."

As Dick looked up at the solid stone walls of the fort, which the rays of the rising sun were already bathing in golden light, and bringing out with impressive distinctness the dark embrasures where the cannon hid, he could not help a shudder of apprehension. The boats seemed to present so fair a mark for the unseen artillery, and they would be so helpless in the event of a cannonade, encumbered as they were with the heavy schooner.

"I hope they're not good shots, sir," was his response. "They can do us a lot of harm if they are."

As he spoke a flash leaped from one of the embrasures, followed by a report that made all in the boats turn their heads to watch anxiously for the missile. With a shrill scream it flew high above them, plunging into the water full quarter of a mile away.

"Bah!" sneered Lieutenant M'Kinstry, "if that's a sample of their skill in gunnery we need not feel alarmed. Give way, men; we'll soon be out of range."

Reassured by the result of the first shot, the seamen bent to their oars again, while the fort blazed away at them without succeeding in hitting them once, the constant movement of the boats effectually puzzling the gunners, who, indeed, seemed to be in as great a state of perturbation, judging from their marksmanship, as if they themselves were being attacked. Finally despairing of hitting the launches, they turned their guns upon the schooner, no doubt with the intention of rendering her a valueless prize if they could possibly do so.

In this they were more successful; at all events they managed to hull her a couple of times, and to do some damage to her top hamper, before the boats could get her around a point which offered complete protection from further injury.

"The miserable beggars!" said the lieutenant scornfully; "they haven't the grace to take their defeat like men."

Just outside the harbour they were joined by the other boats which had been sent to storm the fort. The marines, under command of Lieutenant Beatie,

had fulfilled their difficult commission admirably. Although challenged and fired upon by the sentinels, and perfectly ignorant of the nature and number of the troops they had to contend with, in the most soldier-like manner they had pushed on straight into the fort with fixed bayonets, driving the garrison before them like a flock of sheep, and compelling them to cry for quarter, which was instantly granted.

No time was lost in dismounting and spiking the guns, destroying the carriages, and blowing up the magazine; all of which having been successfully accomplished, the marines retired in good order with fifteen prisoners, and without the loss of a single man.

Captain Pitewell was vastly pleased with the unqualified success of the expedition, and distributed his hearty commendation with a free hand, not forgetting to specially mention both Lieutenant McKinsty and Lieutenant Beatie in his account of the affair to the admiral. The results certainly had been highly satisfactory. By the capture of the *Harmonic*, a fine schooner mounting eight guns and carrying a crew of over sixty men, the seas had been rid of a dangerous enemy to British commerce, and a welcome addition made to the fleet; for after some slight repairs the

swift privateer would be as ready for service as ever. Moreover, the blow struck at Martinique would be felt throughout the islands, and would greatly increase the respect felt for British arms.

When Dick's timely service to the lieutenant became known in the gun-room, he was warmly congratulated by those whose admiration for a brave deed rose above their envy of a more fortunate companion; but Bulstrode only scowled more fiercely at him, and swore more savagely at "that miserable little whipper-snapper of a tondy," as he was pleased to call him. Dick, however, took no notice, going blithely on his way as usual; which course of action, as may be easily imagined, did not by any means diminish the other's ill-humour, but, on the contrary, served only to add fuel to its flame.

Seeing how exceedingly unpopular Bulstrode was among his companions, it did seem rather strange that he should have been permitted to indulge his malignity to the extent that he was, and that the other midshipmen did not band together to suppress him. That this was not the case simply illustrated the frailty of our poor human nature.

In spite of their admiration for his dauntless spirit and appreciation of his attractive nature, Dick's mess-

mates could not resist a certain feeling of jealousy because of the manifest favour with which he was regarded by the senior officers; and moreover, while in their hearts they approved of his staunch devotion to principle and frank confession of his religion, yet somehow or other they found a small kind of satisfaction in seeing him tormented. They thought he occasionally needed being "taken down a peg," lest he should become "too cocky;" and consequently they were not moved to take those measures to put an end to Bulstrode's malicious activity which otherwise they might have done. They were good enough fellows notwithstanding. They merely did not choose to undertake any responsibility in the matter. Master Dick could fight his own battles, and would be all the better for doing so.

Had Dick exercised the same reasoning in regard to Tenderly, that poor boy would have led the most miserable of existences. He had a hard enough time of it as it was, but his lot was greatly mitigated no less by Dick's friendship than by his championship. At every opportunity he took Tenderly's part, even though this sometimes entailed getting into warm water himself, and by his ever-ready sympathy instilled fresh courage into the poor lad's heart when

he was so utterly cast down as to feel that his life was scarcely worth living.

The days that followed the capture of the *Harmonie* were full of activity and excitement for those on board the *Gryphon*. The Caribbean Sea fairly swarmed with French privateers, the most of them swift-sailing schooners armed with from twelve to four long-range guns, and manned by crews composed of the most desperate characters afloat - negroes, maroons, Spaniards, and Malays, commanded by French officers as cruel and greedy for gain as themselves.

These pests of the sea having their rendezvous at Martinique, Guadeloupe, San Domingo, and other islands, darted out from their lairs like beasts of prey, and pounced upon unprotected merchant vessels passing by, treating their unfortunate crews with shocking barbarity, and destroying such portions of their cargoes as they could not dispose of to advantage.

The British fleet then in the West Indies under the flag of Sir Samuel Hood was not composed of many vessels, the majority of the ships being required in European waters to keep watch over the "Corsican Ogre," whose capabilities for mischief could never be confidently estimated; consequently the vessels that were on the West Indian station had abundant work

to do in guarding the islands, and at the same time protecting commerce. To the *Gryphon*, as the best sailer in the fleet, the latter duty was particularly assigned, and lively time she had of it sailing hither and thither, principally in the neighbourhood of Martinico, and overhauling every vessel that looked at all suspicious.

Within a month after the capture of *L'Harmonie* three other privateers were similarly disposed of. The first was a small schooner that the look-out sighted about two o'clock in the afternoon, making slyly for Port Royal, having apparently just returned from a cruise. It being nearly calm, the big frigate could not get within gun-shot; so a pinnace and a barge well manned were despatched to cut her off before she made the land.

Dick and Tenderly climbed into the main-top to watch the chase, which was very exciting. The privateer had her sweeps out, and in spite of the calm made pretty good speed. But the boats, impelled by brawny oarsmen who put their whole strength into every stroke, steadily gained upon her.

"Hurrah!" cried Dick, quivering with excitement as he grasped one of the stays and leaned perilously far out in his eagerness to miss nothing; "they're

gaining fast—they'll soon be up to her. I wonder will the privateer show fight."

The last words were hardly out of his mouth when a series of flashes and a cloud of smoke springing from the schooner's stern showed that her crew had no idea of being taken without a struggle; and as, judging from the report that came across the water, not only musketry but grape was being used, Dick's interest in the chase began to give way to concern for his shipmates.

"The rascals are blazing away at them with grape," he cried in an indignant tone, as if it was the greatest possible presumption on their part to defend themselves. "If they get the range of the boats they'll kill some of our fellows, sure."

Neither grape nor musketry caused any slackening of the speed with which the barge and pinnace ploughed through the water; and a few minutes later, with a thrilling cheer they dashed alongside, and their crews swarmed over the bulwarks. Once on board they had it all their own way. The privateersmen threw down their arms and begged for quarter, and the rather inaccurately named *Fortunée*, mounting two carriage-guns and carrying thirty men, was in the possession of her foes, who had not even so much as one man wounded in the engagement.

The second capture proved a more difficult piece of work, and in this affair Sub-Lieutenant Henderson, the best friend Dick had in the gun-room, particularly distinguished himself, greatly to the gratification of Dick, who longed for the time when he would be old enough to be put in command of a boat, and set off to win glory on his own account.

The *Gryphon* had been down as far south as Trinidad, and was cruising about in the vicinity of that island, when a suspicious sail was sighted and immediately chased. As luck would have it, just as the frigate got within four miles of the schooner the wind dropped, and it was necessary to continue the chase in the boats. Three cutters were sent out, and the one which Lieutenant Henderson commanded making much better time than the others, reached the privateer while they were still some distance away.

The lieutenant had only sixteen men in his boat, and a heavy fire of musketry and grape was coming from the schooner; but nothing daunted, he laid the cutter alongside and boarded the enemy, carrying her with a rush that fairly bewildered her crew, receiving a slight wound himself in the *mélée*. By the time the other two boats came up there was little left for them to do, and their men were much disappointed

at being thus reduced to the position of spectators of what was certainly one of the most brilliant feats of the year—the prize being the stout schooner *La Ressource*, mounting four guns and carrying fifty men, which had been a great annoyance to British commerce.

Dick was a good deal startled at seeing his friend come back with his head bound up, a stray bullet having just missed finding its way into his brain. But, happily, there was no cause for concern, the wound being comparatively slight—so slight, indeed, that when the prize crew to be put on board the captured privateer was being made up, Lieutenant Henderson claimed the honour of commanding it, and was allowed to have his own way.

So soon as Dick knew this he got all in a flutter of eagerness to accompany him.

La Ressource was to be taken to Kingston, there to be fitted up for service under her new owners, and the idea of going in her was full of attraction to his adventurous spirit. He lost no time in making known his desire to Lieutenant M'Kinstry, who at first did not seem disposed to accede.

"You'll have a very good chance of being taken yourself, my boy," said he, in a tone of kindly persua-

sion. "How would you like the idea of being prisoner in the hands of the French for a while?"

"Not a bit, sir," laughed Dick. "But you know some midshipman has to be sent with Mr. Henderson, and none of the others are particularly anxious, and if you don't mind, sir, I'd like very much to be allowed."

The first lieutenant looked down into the bright, eager face before him. This was the kind of spirit he delighted to meet with. It was the secret of England's supremacy of the seas, and so long as it failed not, so long would the sceptre remain in British hands; only his reluctance to expose his favourite midshipman to extra danger made him hesitate about granting Dick's request, and when the boy, bringing his hand to the salute, ventured to add in his most imploring tone, "Won't you please let me go, sir?" it seemed to him that he would not be doing right to allow his personal feelings to decide the matter, so he said,—

"Well, Dick, I'll see what the captain says. If he has no objection, I'll not stand in your way."

CHAPTER VIII.

OVERCOMING AND BEING OVERCOME.

ON Dick's request being laid before Captain Fite-
well, that officer summoned him into his pres-
ence to ask him a few questions. Although he did
not take the same interest in the young lad that the
first lieutenant did, yet on account of his father, who
had been kind to him when he was his junior on the
same ship many years before, he felt well disposed
toward Dick, and willing enough to allow him any
opportunity of making his way.

When Dick presented himself the captain was en-
joying an after-dinner glass of sherry, and his first
proceeding was to pour out another and invite the
boy to take it. Dick reddened to the roots of his
hair. It had been comparatively easy to refuse
Bulstrode's coarse challenge the day he tried to make
him drink his mother's health in the gun-room, but
to refuse the captain's invitation, in his own cabin

and in the presence of several of the officers, was an entirely different matter. He was so confused that he stood there, cap in hand, perfectly silent, and the very picture of bewilderment.

Captain Fitewell misunderstanding his feeling, and supposing that it was simply bashfulness, held out the glass towards him, repeating his invitation. Dick took the glass from his hand, but instead of putting it to his lips, replaced it on the table, murmuring, in a scarcely audible voice,—

“If you please, sir, I’d rather not, sir.”

Considerably surprised—for in all his experience of midshipmen he had never before known one to refuse a glass of wine in the captain’s cabin—Captain Fitewell, with a glance around at the other officers as though to say, “Here’s an odd fish for you! What do you think of this?” looked hard into Dick’s flushed face as he exclaimed,—

“Not have a glass of wine with me! Pray, how is that?”

Never had Dick felt himself to be in so tight a corner. To explain his refusal might expose him on the one hand to ridicule for being “tied to his mother’s apron-strings,” and on the other to giving the impression that he did not drink wine because he considered

it wrong, and therefore, as a matter of course, condemned his superior officers for doing it. An awkward dilemma for a boy to be placed in certainly, and no wonder if he stood there embarrassed and silent until the captain was stirred to say somewhat testily,—

“Well, my boy, what’s the matter? where’s your tongue?”

Realizing that he must explain his action, Dick decided, on the spur of the moment, to tell the truth frankly, let the consequences be what they might; so, bringing his hand to the salute, he said, in a clear tone, audible to all in the cabin,—

“I promised my mother never to taste wine, sir. She was afraid I might get too fond of it.”

Captain Fitewell looked him over from head to heel, and then turning round to the others, said, as he brought his right hand down upon the table,—

“Gentlemen, did you hear that? Dear old England will never want for Nelson so long as her sons have stuff in them like Midshipman Holland.”

There was a murmur of warm assent and approval from the men seated about the table; and the chaplain, who dearly loved his glass of wine, might have been observed to give it a peculiar look, as though the

doubt had arisen in his mind as to whether he was doing just right in indulging his weakness.

Turning back to Dick, Captain Fitewell went on,—

“Your conduct does you credit, sir, and your principles shall be duly respected. And now as to accompanying Lieutenant Henderson on board the prize, are you very desirous of doing so?”

“With your permission, sir, I am,” responded Dick, bowing low.

“Well, Master Holland, I see no objection, provided you promise to take good care of yourself.”

“Thank you, sir; I’ll do my best, sir,” answered Dick, his countenance beaming with delight; and giving another emphatic bob, he hurried away to tell the first lieutenant that the captain’s permission had been obtained.

As he left the cabin, Captain Fitewell followed him with a look of unwonted tenderness, and then addressing the other officers, said,—

“A noble little fellow that! If he does not become food for powder or the fishes, he’ll be high up on the naval list by the time he’s our age.”

As gleeful as if he had been granted leave for a long holiday, Dick, having settled matters with Lieutenant M’Kinstry, hastened to fill a canvas bag with

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such things as he wanted to take on board the privateer, whistling merrily while he went about it. He was in the midst of his task when Bulstrode came down, having just finished his watch. He was in a particularly bad humour, one of the midshipmen having brought to him an account of the scene in the cabin, which he had purposely painted in the strongest possible colours, because he knew what gall and bitterness it would be to the bully.

Catching sight of Dick, Bulstrode drew near, and leaning against a bulkhead, said, in the most aggravating tone he could command,—

“What a good little boy he is, to be sure! Wouldn’t take a glass of wine because his mammy would rather not. The dear little prig, he ought to be a parson, he ought.”

In too happy a frame of mind to be easily angered, Dick affected to take no notice of the insolent fellow, not even lifting his head to look at him. Determined to stir him up to wrath, Bulstrode continued his monologue, growing coarser and coarser as his efforts continued futile, until at last, his evil temper completely carrying him away, he picked up a dirty swab cloth that happened to be near, and flung it fiercely at Dick, snarling out as he did,—

"You can't hear me, eh? well, perhaps that will help you."

Divining that some missile was on its way to him, Dick threw up his head to catch a sight of it and dodge it. But he was not quick enough, and the slimy, ill-smelling thing struck him full in the face.

Stung to fury by so abominable an insult, Dick, oblivious to all considerations of prudence, sprang at his tormentor like a young tiger, and before the latter could get on his guard, hit him with his whole strength squarely between the eyes, sending him staggering backwards half-a-dozen paces.

Uttering a horrid oath, the bully had gathered himself together for a charge upon his plucky little assailant, while Dick threw himself into a posture of defence, when Lieutenant Henderson came suddenly out from the gun-room, and seeing that there was something amiss, demanded an explanation.

By way of reply Dick picked up the swab, and pointed to his face, upon which its dirty marks were easily visible. Bulstrode, not to be outdone, pointed to his face, in the centre of which a crimson contusion was already revealing itself.

The lieutenant took in the situation at a glance.

"Oh, I understand! Well, it would seem that

honours are even. Let that be an end of it.—Mr. Bulstrode, you had better look after that bruise at once, or you'll have an ugly pair of black eyes.—Mr. Holland, as soon as your packing is finished come to me in the gun-room."

Muttering threats of dire vengeance, Bulstrode took himself off to the surgeon; while Dick, having washed his face, hastily completed his packing and reported to Mr. Henderson as he had been bidden. When the first flush of passion had passed away, he began to feel somewhat ashamed of himself. To return blow for blow was not the highest kind of conduct, however great the provocation. In giving way to the impulse to strike he had lowered himself to Bulstrode's own level, and even although he felt perfectly confident that there was no one on board the *Gryphon* who on learning the facts would not applaud his action, still in the depths of his own heart there was the conviction that he really deserved condemnation, not applause. So heavily did this feeling bear upon his mind that at the first opportunity he made his way into the main-top, and there, with the darkness all about him, he looked up to God and pleaded for pardon.

Returning to the deck much comforted and cheered,

he met Lieutenant Henderson, who told him to get his things together, as they were going on board the prize that night. A quarter of an hour later the little prize crew, consisting of Lieutenant Henderson, Midshipman Holland, and sixteen stout sailors, bade good-bye to their shipmates, and took possession of the privateer, with orders to lay by until morning, and then, if the outlook was favourable, to set sail for Kingston.

Dick found it hard work to get to sleep that night. The exciting events of the evening, the novelty of his present position, and the thrilling uncertainty of his immediate future, combined to throw him into an unusual state of restlessness. He tossed and tumbled about in his berth in the stuffy little cabin until long after midnight, greatly envying Lieutenant Henderson, who was snoring away as regularly as if he was in his own place on the *Gryphon*.

The following day was fine and clear, and Lieutenant Henderson, having by careful examination satisfied himself that he would require on board his charge, set all sail, and firing a farewell gun, slipped away before a favouring breeze with Kingston as his destination.

La Ressource carried a cloud of canvas, and was a

good sailer, her sharp bow cutting through the water at the rate of eight knots an hour all that day. A keen look-out was carefully kept, with the object, in the first place, of sighting, as soon as possible, any French men-of-war that might be cruising around, in order to get out of their way with all practicable speed; and in the second, of getting hold of any other prizes that should not be too big to tackle.

Nothing, however, of interest occurred during the first day. From dawn until dark the swift schooner sped steadily onward, and Dick had little else to do than lounge about the deck, and sweep the vast expanse of wave-tossed azure with the glass, hoping all the time that its monotony would be broken by a speck of white.

During the night he took turns on watch with Lieutenant Henderson, and as during the hours of duty he paced the deck alone, or exchanged a few words with the man at the wheel, he had a novel sense of responsibility, and seemed to himself to have suddenly grown several years older. He felt an intense longing to see his mother once more, and to have a good long talk with her about the events that crowded the days; for although he kept faithfully to his promise to write to her at least once a week, and

she never failed to do the same, still letters, however lengthy and loving, made but a poor substitute for speaking face to face, and there were many things which did not go into the letters which he would have told her could he have done it by word of mouth.

When Lieutenant Henderson relieved him, and he went below for his turn in the bunk, he fell asleep, to dream about the cottage in sunny Kent, and to imagine himself back there again, relating to a deeply-interested audience, composed of his mother and the two old servants, the story of his wanderings, and of his many adventures afloat and ashore.

The dream was so delightful that on waking up to its unreality a severe qualm of homesickness seized him, which brought the tears into his eyes, and made him quite miserable for a few moments. But he soon recovered his composure, and hurrying into his uniform made his way to the deck, just in time to catch the exciting announcement from the look-out of,—

“Sail on the weather-bow, sir.”

At once every eye was eagerly turned in the direction indicated, and there, sure enough, just rising above the horizon, was a white speck, which presently the glasses made out to be the canvas of a schooner, apparently of the same size as *La Ressource*.

"Another of the rascals, as sure as you're born," cried Lieutenant Henderson, his face lighting up at the prospect of an exciting chase and the chance of effecting a second capture. "We'll crack on all sail and overhaul him, unless his vessel can show us her heels."

Although there was a brisk breeze blowing, every stitch of canvas the schooner could carry was spread to it, and she fairly staggered through the white caps, with every shroud and stay and sheet strained as tight as a fiddle-string.

"Aha!" exclaimed the lieutenant, rubbing his hands gleefully, "just hear her speak, Dick! These Frenchies know something about getting hold of fast schooners, even if they don't know how to keep them."

The little vessel certainly was speaking in a very audible way, as the sound made by the fore-foot rushing through the water is called, while the wind sang like an Æolian harp through the taut weather-rigging.

"She does indeed, sir," responded Dick, who was keenly enjoying the lively motion of the schooner. "We ought to soon overhaul that sail at this rate."

"Unless they smell a rat on board her, and make

off without waiting to ask or answer any questions," returned Lieutenant Henderson.

It soon became evident that this was precisely what those on board the other schooner proposed to do. When first sighted she had been carrying only her main-sail, fore-sail, and jib; but presently the two gaff top-sails and the flying-jib were spread, and thus heavily canvassed she too tore her way through the seas at the very top of her speed.

"We're going to have a long chase of it, Dick," said the lieutenant; "but I think we've got the best ship of the two, and that we're bound to win in the end."

Through that long bright forenoon the chase continued, the French privateer resorting to every possible device to shake off her persistent pursuer, but all without avail. Neither the lieutenant nor Dick left the deck for a moment; the former managing his craft with wonderful skill, thanks to a somewhat extensive experience in yachting, begun in his boyhood, and continued whenever being at home on leave allowed him opportunity.

"We're gaining steadily, Dick," said he, with a triumphant note in his voice. "By three o'clock we'll be in hail of her, and then we'll let Johnny Crapaud know our business."

The estimate proved correct. By three o'clock *La Ressource* was within hail of the chase, and made the latter aware of the fact, in case she did not know it already, by yawing sufficiently to bring one of the bow guns to bear upon her, whose iron missive went skipping past her stern in no very pleasant proximity. At the same moment the British ensign flaunted from the peak, and Lieutenant Henderson springing on to the poop with a large trumpet at his mouth, shouted in stentorian tones,—

“Lay to there immediately, or I'll give you a broadside!”

CHAPTER IX.

THE TABLES TURNED.

INSTEAD of complying, the French vessel kept steadily on her way, while the British one lost some ground by the manœuvre. This angered Lieutenant Henderson; and although he was anxious to avoid bloodshed if possible, still he was even more determined to make the capture.

"These fools evidently don't consider discretion the better part of valour," said he, "and I'll have to give them a lesson."

Keeping well to windward, he pushed ahead in silence until he was abreast of the privateer-- in fact, had her fairly blanketed. Then without any challenge this time he ordered a broadside from all four guns, and the small arms likewise, to be poured into the silent vessel, whose crew, with the exception of the man at the wheel, were evidently crowding behind the low bulwarks or hiding in the hold.

The splintering crash of shattered wood and the cries of wounded men told how true had been the aim of the gunners and marksmen. The man at the wheel disappeared, and the schooner, which carried a weather-helm, being thus left to herself, came up into the wind, so as to run right across the bows of *La Ressource*. This was precisely what Lieutenant Henderson wanted. Letting his vessel run off a few points in order to save his bowsprit, he brought her with admirable skill so close astern of the other that the grappling-irons caught at the first throw, and in another minute the two schooners were side by side.

"Now, my hearties," shouted the lieutenant, "after me!"

His men did not need a second command. With a thrilling cheer they sprang over the bulwarks, and swinging their cutlasses on high, prepared to cut down any one who might dare to oppose their advance.

But they found nobody on board in that frame of mind. Stretched upon the deck, groaning with pain, were some half-dozen more or less badly-wounded sailors, while the steersman lay dead beside his wheel. Not another soul was visible.

"Look out for some beggarly trick," cried the lieutenant, and directing four of the men to put them-

selves at the fore-hatch, with pistols and cutlasses ready for instant action, he ranged the others around the cabin in a similar position. Then pointing his own pistol down the open companion-way, he called out in his most commanding tones,—

“Ahoy, below there! Come up on deck at once, or I’ll fire into you.”

Whether the Frenchmen understood his words or not they certainly did his attitude, for immediately there was a murmur of voices below and a sound of movement, and then out of the obscurity there appeared the head of an officer, quickly followed by that of another, and then by a common sailor, until presently no less than ten men had extricated themselves from the tiny cabin, and stood upon the deck unarmed and looking ridiculously sheepish.

The same process was going on simultaneously at the fore-hatch, whence five more men had emerged. Counting the wounded, the crew consisted of twenty-one men, or four more than their captors. With the exception of the officer in command and those immediately under him, they were such an ugly lot of cut-throats that Lieutenant Henderson, turning to Dick, said in an undertone,—

“What a villanous-looking gang they are! It

would be a good riddance to blow them all up. They're only fit for the gallows any way."

One of their number, who evidently understood English, overhearing the remarks, gave the speaker such a look of mingled terror and hate, at the same time laying his hand to his dirk, that Dick involuntarily shrank back, and grasped the lieutenant's arm, whispering,—

"Take care, sir; they understand what you are saying."

"All the better if they do, Dick," was the laughing reply. "They'll have all the more respect for us if they know we take them to be what they really are."

On examination the prize proved to be the privateer *La Minie*, carrying one long eighteen-pound gun on a pivot, and a crew of twenty-one men. Her captain was evidently profoundly chagrined at being taken by a smaller force than he commanded. As he afterwards took the trouble to explain through an interpreter, he had supposed that the English crew would not be less than fifty strong, and had thought it better not to show fight at all, since he could not save himself by flight.

Once the excitement of the capture was over, and it became necessary to arrange for the disposition of

the prize, Lieutenant Henderson found himself considerably nonplussed. He did not want to destroy *La Minie*, for that meant a loss of prize-money; and, moreover, she would make an acceptable addition to the British fleet. Yet with the small prize crew he had he did not feel like dividing it in two, as would be inevitable were the prize to be retained. Furthermore, who was to command the other schooner?

Into the midst of his deliberations broke Dick, with a proposal that at first well-nigh took his breath away. The boy's quick wit had discerned his superior officer's dilemma, and fearful lest he should discover some solution of it other than the one which had taken possession of his own mind, he hastened to suggest that a prize crew be placed upon the *La Minie*, and that he, Master Richard Holland, be given command of it!

"You delightful little bantam-cock!" cried the lieutenant, holding him off at arm's length, as though to examine his fighting points. "For sublime self-confidence you certainly are unique. Fifteen years of age, five feet high, one year at sea, and calmly proposing to take command of a ship!—Hi, there, Taf-frail!" raising his voice and beckoning to the burly boatswain, who was a little distance off, "steer this

way a moment, if you please." Then as the seaman drew near with a respectful bob, he added, "What do you think of this, Taffrail?" and proceeded to tell him how matters stood; while Dick, in considerable uncertainty as to whether the lieutenant was just making game of him or would seriously consider his suggestion, fell back a step, blushing furiously, and eying the boatswain somewhat anxiously to see how he took it. Vastly to his relief, the grizzled veteran seemed to be quite favourably impressed with the idea.

"If I may be so bold, sir," said he, giving his scanty forelock a sharp tug, as though he would pull it out by the roots, "as to have my say, I'm thinking that Mr. Holland's notion is a very good one; and if you think"—here he dropped his voice to a hoarse whisper, lest Dick should overhear him and have his feelings touched—"as he's too young, sir, to take charge of the schooner, you might, maybe, send me along too, and I'll do the best I can to help to get her safe to Kingston."

The fact of the matter was old Taffrail had a great liking for Dick, whose cheery spirits and constant courtesy had indeed made all the sailors his friends, and quite appreciating the situation, he was anxious

for the enterprising boy to have the chance he sought, to show what he could do on his own hook.

Lieutenant Henderson, despite his good-humoured raillery, had felt favourably disposed towards the plan from the first, but the sending of the boatswain along with Dick had not occurred to him. When it was suggested it quite cleared the way, and he no longer hesitated.

"Well, Dick," said he, in a very different tone from the bantering one in which he had last addressed him, "Taffrail, you see, thinks your idea not a bad one at all, and in fact is quite willing to risk his precious self under your command. So I'll think the matter carefully over, and see how it can be carried out."

Highly elated, Dick went off whistling merrily, while the lieutenant and boatswain consulted together, with the result that the following arrangement was decided upon. The prisoners would be divided, twelve being taken on board *La Ressource* and nine left on *La Minie*, all except the wounded being securely ironed. Then of the prize crew seven, including Taffrail, would go with Dick, and nine would remain with Lieutenant Henderson. The two vessels would keep as close company as possible, *La Ressource* leading; and all haste would be made for Kingston,

which ought to be reached within two days at the furthest.

This plan proved satisfactory to everybody, and was carried out so promptly that before the night fell the two schooners were bowling merrily along together towards Kingston with a beam wind, the prisoners safely bestowed in their holds, and everybody else on board in high good-humour at the prospect of pocketing a nice little sum of prize-money, for the Admiralty paid good rewards for the capture of privateers.

Dick could hardly contain himself for pride and pleasure as he paced the after-deck in all the dignity of his position, ever and anon casting scrutinizing glances at the sails, to make sure that they were drawing properly, and feeling sorely tempted to suggest some slight alteration in the course being sailed, just to show his authority, but restraining himself therefrom lest he should say the wrong thing, and thereby expose himself to the disapproval of old Taf-frail, whose good opinion he was most anxious to conserve.

So deeply did he feel his responsibility that he was loath to leave the deck, and kept his place there until the boatswain respectfully hinted that he would take

the first watch, and that Dick might therefore as well turn in. The latter's first impulse was to resent the suggestion, and to indicate to the sailor that he would judge for himself in the matter. But on second thoughts he took the wiser course of saying,—

“All right, Taffrail; I'll go below and leave you in charge. Call me at eight bells, will you?”

Then feeling much more at ease with himself than if he had yielded to the weakness, he went down into the cabin, and turned into one of the bunks, which he found a good deal more stuffy than his hammock on the *Gryphon*, but where he soon fell sound asleep nevertheless.

When the boatswain, according to direction, aroused him at midnight, he found it hard to turn out. But he was careful not to say so; and the old sailor having disappeared for his snooze, Dick took his place at the wheel. The night was a glorious one. Although there was no moon, the stars shone out with such splendour as to make good amends for her absence. A steady breeze blew from the south-east—the harbinger, maybe, of dirty weather ahead, but very pleasant while it lasted; and the two schooners, with main-sail, fore-sail, and gaff top-sails spread to make the most of it, cut their way through the waves,

lying over at every puff until the water came rushing in through the lee scuppers.

La Ressource burned a bright light astern for the guidance of *La Minie* ; but it was hardly necessary, so easily visible was she through the semi-obscurity, and the two vessels being well matched in point of speed, had no difficulty in keeping near together.

"I wish mother could only see me now," soliloquized Dick, as he stood by the wheel and looked along the deck and up at the swelling sails. "Won't she feel proud when she gets my letter telling her that I've been in command of a ship already ! for even although it is only a small schooner, still I'm in command all the same." Then came another thought which brought a smile to his face, "And I wonder how Bulstrode will like it when he hears it. The great hulking bully that he is, I just wish he would leave me alone. I'm sure I don't want to have anything to do with him. And poor old Tenderly, wouldn't he give anything to be with me ! I'm mighty sorry he isn't. He'd go anywhere to get away from Bulstrode and to be with me."

With such thoughts occupying his mind, varied by conjectures as to the amount of prize-money that would fall to his share, and whether he would have

much time at Kingston and be able to pay his kind friends there another visit, Dick whiled away the long hours of his watch. He was very glad when his four hours were up and the boatswain emerged from the cabin to relieve him.

"I think I'll take another turn below, Taffrail," said he, with a prodigious yawn. "You might have a look at the prisoners, and see how they're getting on."

During the night the schooners left Puerto Rico, off which they had been sailing, far behind, and the morning found them crossing Mona Passage, with the huge mass of San Domingo growing upon the horizon over their starboard bow. They were now entering the region of greatest danger, as the French had not yet been driven out by the blacks, and the port of San Domingo was a favourite rendezvous for their frigates and privateers. There was no other course to be followed, however. They must run the gauntlet, and take their chances of the result.

Up to mid-day no other sail had broken the monotony of tumbled blue; the breeze continued strong from the right quarter, and although there was good ground for anxiety until the coast-line of San Domingo should disappear astern and that of

Jamaica show over the bows, still everybody on board both vessels felt cheery, and hopeful of making Kingston unmolested.

But their sanguine reckoning was doomed to be presently brought to naught. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, when the royals of a large square-rigged vessel were made out to windward. With keen concern they were scanned by Lieutenant Henderson on board *La Ressource* and Boatswain Taffrail on *La Minie*. Was the new-comer friend or foe? Steadily she grew upon the horizon, evidently having every stitch of canvas spread, and making great speed. It soon became clear that she had sighted the schooners, and was in pursuit. There was, accordingly, nothing for the latter to do but to make their utmost possible efforts to escape. Then began a chase so exciting that Dick could never afterwards recall it without a quickening of his heart-throbs.

No device known to sailors was left untried to improve the speed of the schooners, Dick keeping a sharp eye on the leader, and immediately imitating whatever was done on her.

The sails were drenched with water in order to make them better hold the wind. The guns with their carriages, together with the greater part of the

ammunition, were cast overboard, so as to lighten the vessels, and a couple of spare jibs found on board were rigged out as temporary studding-sails.

All these things had their good effect, the trim little schooners responding to them by manifest increases of speed as promptly as though their own masters were in command. But still the big square-rigged vessel, now easily recognizable through the glass as a French frigate of not less than twenty guns, gained surely if somewhat slowly upon them.

"I'm afraid we can't shake that fellow off, sir," said Taffrail to Dick, a very glum look coming over his honest, weather-beaten face as he snapped the glass together after taking a long look through it. "If we could only keep out of his clutches until nightfall, we might get away from him. But," and the old man gave a great sigh, "he'll be right upon us long before that."

Dick could not repress a shiver at these words, the truth of which his own eyes confirmed. The prospect of being captured by the French was anything but pleasing. He had heard many tales of the hardships endured by those who had been in their power, and he rightly enough conceived that to be taken red-handed, so to speak, in possession of a captured priva-

teer, with a number of her crew in irons in the hold, was about the worst situation in which to be found by them.

However, it would not do to put any other than a brave face upon the matter; so he replied to the boatswain, in as steady a tone as he could command,—

“Right you are, Taffrail, and it’ll be no use our trying to fight him off, will it? We’d only be losing our lives for nothing.”

“Not a bit of use, sir,” responded Taffrail, shaking his head mournfully, for it was strangely out of accord with his sturdy pugnacious disposition to yield without a struggle; but he recognized the hopelessness of the situation, and that it would be sheer criminal folly to excite the ire of their enemies by a futile resistance that might cost many lives on both sides.

In the meantime the frigate was steadily overhauling them, and presently she yawed sufficiently to allow one of her bow-chasers to be fired, the shot skipping over the waves in such dangerous proximity to the schooner that Taffrail exclaimed excitedly,—

“Shiver my timbers, but the frog-eaters must have some good gunners aboard.”

As the schooner still kept on her way, her pursuer sent another shot after her. This one was even better

aimed, for it went whistling through the rigging, snapping a number of ropes, and plunging into the sea fifty yards beyond the little vessel's bow.

There was no mistaking what this meant. The next iron missile would certainly come crashing aboard, and some life would be needlessly lost.

"Bring her up into the wind, Taffail," ordered Dick, with a big sob in his voice.

Looking as mournful as a mute at a funeral, the boatswain obeyed; and with her sails flapping idly, the trim little schooner awaited the coming of her deliverer from the alien hands that had for a brief time held her in bondage.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

IN glorious style the frigate came sweeping on until almost in a line with the schooner, and a hundred yards to windward. Then she too went up into the wind, and as soon as her headway stopped, a boat was lowered which, filled with armed men, sped towards the motionless schooner.

In grim silence the prize crew awaited its arrival. They would have dearly loved to fight to the very last; and although those in the boat outnumbered them two to one, had they been their only assailants they would have done so; but with the big guns of the frigate ready shotted to smash their vessel into splinters, any resistance would have been the most utter folly. So they stood upon the deck in orderly array, their bronzed countenances expressing their feelings with a frankness that was hardly politic, to say the least.

The moment the boat touched the schooner's side, a dapper little officer in brilliant uniform, and with moustaches waxed as though he were just ready to show himself upon the Boulevards, sprang lightly over the bulwarks, and with a sweeping bow called upon the Englishmen to surrender.

Without saying a word, Dick handed him his sword; and then, unable to control the rush of feeling that swept over him at this unfortunate termination of his enterprise, he turned away, and went towards the cabin.

Appreciating the situation with the quick instinct of his race, the French officer gave an expressive shrug of his shoulders, and directed his men, who were all on board by this time, to make a thorough search of the vessel.

Great was the joy of the prisoners in the hold when their rescuers appeared amongst them and hastened to knock off the hateful irons. Many of them wept like children, and hugged the men of the frigate with a heartiness that would have made the more stolid Englishmen laugh under any other circumstances. As it was, they were too much engrossed in speculating as to what sort of treatment they would receive at the hands of their

captors to appreciate the humorousness of the proceeding.

Dick comforted himself with the thought that barring the irons, which were absolutely necessary under the circumstances, the French prisoners had been well enough treated by him, and that therefore he and his men had a right to expect similar treatment in return. Of course he was not in a position to make any other than an unconditional surrender, and he would have to trust entirely to the clemency of his enemies, in whose power he now was.

Another boat having been signalled for, the prize crew and their whilom prisoners were taken over to the frigate, where the former were received with looks of intense curiosity, and the latter with shouts of joyous pride. Dick was at once conducted to the captain's cabin, and there found himself in the presence of a richly-uniformed officer of about middle age, with a handsome, kindly countenance, who regarded him with a look of mingled amusement and interest that certainly had nothing terrifying in it.

"Have I the honour of addressing the officer in command?" he asked, with a courteous inclination of his head.

Dick bowed low in reply.

"Pardon me if I venture to inquire the name of the ship to which you belong," he continued, still smiling pleasantly.

Dick gave him the information.

"Ah, the *Gryphon*—Captain Fitewell. I have heard of them both. And do you mind telling me how you came to be in possession of our privateer?"

There was something so reassuring about both the man and his manner that Dick's tongue became unloosed, and he proceeded to give a frank and faithful account of the whole transaction, the French captain listening with good-humoured interest.

"*Parbleu!* but you are a brave boy," he exclaimed when Dick had finished his tale. "You shall be treated with all the honours of war. Do me the honour to be my guest for the present."

This reception was so entirely different from what Dick had anticipated, that the poor boy had no small difficulty in controlling his feelings, and keeping back the tears that filled his eyes. He did manage to restrain them, however, and to express to the captain, in the best language he could command, his gratitude for being so courteously treated. But no sooner had he thus spoken than there flashed into his mind the thought that he was not the only one to be

considered. Good old Taffrail and the men, how were they being dealt with? The question must be asked at once.

"If you please, sir," said he, giving a deferential nod of his head, "what will be done with my men?"

"What do you think ought to be done?" answered the captain, with a quizzical smile. "Put them in irons, as you did our seamen?"

Dick's countenance fell. For him to be luxuriating in the captain's cabin while his faithful men languished in irons in some dark corner of the hold was not according to his liking at all. Yet how could he expect any other arrangement under the circumstances? Then a happy thought struck him.

"I tell you what I'll do, sir," he said eagerly. "I'll get them all to promise faithfully not to make any attempt to escape, or to give any trouble at all, if you'll only not have them put in irons."

The captain laughed.

"You want them put on parole," said he. "Well, for your sake I'll allow it this time, although it is not usual." He then gave orders for the prize crew to be brought to the quarter-deck, where he would speak to them, and presently went on deck, inviting Dick to accompany him.

When the men saw their young commander evidently on such good terms with the French captain, their countenances, which had been very dejected, brightened up considerably; and when the latter made known in a short speech the condition upon which Dick had secured for them the privilege of immunity from the dreaded irons, they could not keep back a hearty cheer. Marshalled by Taffrail, they jointly and severally gave their word to make no attempt to escape, and then were dismissed with lightened hearts to make themselves at home as best they could among the other sailors.

Had Dick been a guest instead of a prisoner of war upon the French frigate, he would have enjoyed himself exceedingly well. There were other officers besides the captain who could make a tolerable fist at the English language, and they showed a lively interest in the midshipman, asking him all sorts of questions about his life on shipboard, and what he had seen since he had been in the West Indies.

These Dick answered readily enough; but when they tried to draw him out about the size and disposition of the British fleet in those waters, he resolutely refused to commit himself. They made no attempts to force him, and they exercised considerable

ingenuity in trying to catch him unawares. But his quick wit proved a match for them every time, and the captain's admiration was greatly increased when he saw how shrewd and steadfast the young officer was.

While all this was taking place, *La Ressource* had been making good her escape, and the last Dick saw of her was hull down on the horizon beyond all chance of capture. But the French captain did not seem to mind this. He was apparently well content at the recovery of *La Minie*; and having given orders for the frigate to be headed towards San Domingo, went below to dinner with the air of a man who had done a good day's work, and carried a comfortable conscience in consequence.

It was late the following afternoon when the frigate made her way into the port of San Domingo, where *La Minie* was without delay put in readiness to resume her work of destruction, while the frigate joined the naval force then stationed there to protect the French interests, which were seriously imperilled through the successful operations of the blacks, who, under their leaders Dessalines and Christophe, were making the country decidedly too hot for the European intruders upon their ancestral domains.

Most alarming were the reports that came on board, and Dick heartily wished himself away from the ill-fated island which was the theatre of such awful scenes of cruelty and bloodshed. The French had refused to treat the negroes, who after all were only fighting for their own freedom, as human beings, but hunted them with blood-hounds, and inflicted the most hideous tortures upon any who were taken prisoners. The consequence was that they on their part were turned into avenging furies, and did not fail when they had the opportunity to retaliate in kind.

The arrival of *La Creole*—that being the name of the frigate with Dick on board—was particularly timely, for news had been received that the black army was preparing for an attack upon the city; and General Rochambeau, the French commander-in-chief, at once sent for Captain Bargeaud, to ascertain how many marines and sailors he could place at his disposal.

The following morning one hundred men, under the command of the captain himself, landed from the frigate. Just before he was leaving, Captain Bargeaud sent for Dick, and invited him to accompany him, not as a combatant, but simply as a spectator, promising to get him a place near the

commander-in-chief, whence he could see all that took place.

Now, in heart Dick thoroughly sympathized with the blacks in their struggle for freedom, and hoped that the French would be soundly beaten, and driven out of the island. He was anxious, therefore, to get a glimpse of the black army, and form some idea of whether they had any chance of success. So, having been assured that he would not be expected to fight except in self-defence, he willingly accepted the captain's invitation, and in full uniform, with pistols and dirk at his side, he accompanied them on shore.

The situation was this. By a series of small successes the blacks had driven the French back upon the city, and now a decisive battle was to be fought on the plain outside. The blacks, under Dessalines, were in great force and in high spirits. The French, under Rochambeau, were fewer in numbers, and much discouraged; in fact, the question of capitulation was already being seriously considered by them. On the other hand, they had an important advantage as regards equipment and discipline. Indeed their opponents were seriously straitened for ammunition, and would have to push to close quarters with as little delay as possible.

In fulfilment of his promise, Captain Bargeaud introduced Dick to one of the general's aids-de-camp, and bespoke for him a position on the staff that would enable him to have a good view of the whole proceedings.

It was in the midst of a very brilliantly-uniformed party that Dick presently found himself; and having been provided with a horse, he accompanied them out to the field of battle, marvelling to himself at the strange series of events which had brought him into so unusual a position, and thinking what a lot he would have to tell his shipmates if ever he got safely back to the dear old *Gryphon*, and what a long letter he would have to write to his mother if he ever was within reach of a British post-office again.

Very unwisely, as the sequel proved, but with characteristic courage, General Rochambeau had decided to go out to meet the blacks in the open field, relying upon the superior arms and discipline of his forces to effect an easy conquest over the ill-regulated and poorly-equipped negro army. Just beyond the city was a large level plain, admirably suited for the purposes of a military review; and here the French general determined to deal a crushing blow to his opponents, who, if not decisively checked, would soon be investing the city itself.

Not far from the city was an eminence easy of access which commanded the whole plain, and upon this the general took his stand. A little to one side, yet so as to have an unbroken view of the whole action, Dick drew up his horse, and with strangely-divided feelings awaited the issue. The French had, without exception, treated him so kindly that he would have been a monster of ingratitude not to feel under deep obligations to wish their success, and moreover, in a struggle between white and black, it seemed but natural to sympathize with those of one's own colour. And yet there were more reasons than one why he should prefer to see them defeated.

They were undoubted intruders upon the island, the blacks were only fighting for liberty; and still more weighty reason, it was much against British interests that the French should retain their hold upon San Domingo. The great desire of the British was to drive them out of the West Indies altogether, and to add Martinique and Guadeloupe to the superb chain of island jewels that stretched from Puerto Rico to South America. But were the French to succeed in establishing themselves upon San Domingo, the enterprise would be rendered vastly more difficult, if not altogether impossible; for with such a coin of

vantage, they would surely be able to hold their own.

Upon the whole, therefore, Dick felt that the balance of sympathy was rightfully with the blacks, and as he caught a glimpse of them moving down on to the plain from the hills beyond, he almost unconsciously breathed a prayer that they might have the victory. He took no thought of how this might affect himself; that matter he left in the hands of the gracious providence which had thus far brought him through so many perils unscathed.

As the blacks took up their position on the plain, it was seen that in numbers they far surpassed the French; but this fact did not give the latter any concern, as they took it for granted their superiority in other respects would more than compensate for the deficiency. Fully realizing the advantage of prompt action, General Rochambeau sent his vanguard against the blacks before they had time to effect a proper formation upon the plain.

Amidst a whirlwind of cheers and cries the soldiers and sailors dashed across the plain, and flung themselves with tremendous force upon their opponents' front, which gave way before their impetuous onset like standing wheat before a stampede of cattle.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the general, clapping his hands as though he were watching some brilliant performance in an opera-house. "Is not that magnificent? Ah! those black scoundrels, they cannot stand before our brave fellows. See how they are shattered! the battle is already won. Is it not so, Monsieur Holland?" turning exultantly to Dick, who, in his eagerness to watch the charge, had without knowing it moved close to the general's side.

"It looks like it, general," replied Dick, bringing his hand to the salute, and then withdrawing a little as he realized that he was in too prominent a position.

The blacks certainly seemed put to rout, and the French eagerly following up their advantage, pressed forward in pursuit at a rate of speed that soon had its effect upon their orderly array—the men who were slower of foot finding it impossible to keep up with their fleeter comrades, and falling behind until the order of the attack had changed from a solid body into a disorganized mob.

Now, whether Dessalines, the black commander-in-chief, had anticipated something like this, and, with a generalship that did him infinite credit, laid his plans accordingly, or whether he simply took advantage of the opportunity when it presented itself, is not known.

This much, however, was clear, that the rash conduct of his opponents was not lost upon him. He had double the number of men, and he made use of this numerical superiority to permit the French to pierce his centre, and then bringing up his wings he fairly encircled them with his soldiers, by this time roused to the highest pitch of fury.

➤ Dick shuddered when he saw this, and turned his face away. It seemed as though not a single Frenchman could get out of that awful circle of destruction alive. General Rochambeau, his exultant face suddenly changed to keenest anxiety, stormed and swore, and issued order after order with almost frantic rapidity. One of his aids-de-camp, in carrying out an order, with superb daring plunged right into the circle of bloodthirsty blacks, and sabred his way through them to his imperilled countrymen.

The struggle was terrific beyond description, and appalling might have been the result had not a strong reinforcement of marines and sailors come up just in the nick of time. Hurling themselves upon the blacks like a thunderbolt, they shattered their lines, and once more threw them into confusion, allowing the encircled regiments to break their bonds, and retire in fairly good order with many prisoners; while the blacks

sullenly withdrew to their position, not without a number of prisoners also.

There was no more fighting that day, and both sides looked forward to the morrow for a more decisive result. During the night General Rochambeau, regardless of the fact that many of his own officers and men were in the enemy's hands, vented his rage for the discomfiture of the day by executing all his prisoners under circumstances of peculiar barbarity. Some were shockingly mutilated, and allowed to die lingering deaths, their awful shrieks and groans being heard away over in the camp of their countrymen.

The consequence of this disgraceful and senseless proceeding may be readily imagined. Infuriated by it, Dessalines directed a number of gibbets to be put up on the plain in full view of both armies, and when the sun rose next morning, his rays fell upon the swinging bodies of every French officer and private that had been taken prisoner!

Nor was this all. Dessalines' forces had been materially strengthened during the night, and before the sun was well up he gathered them together, and came down like a whirlwind upon the French camp. So early an attack was entirely unexpected. Taken by surprise, the French fought manfully, but in vain.

There was no resisting the impetuosity of their maddened assailants. A fearful slaughter ensued, the blacks showing no quarter except to those who made no resistance, and these were taken prisoners for subsequent torture. Dick sought to effect his escape from the awful confusion, and had almost succeeded, when a huge negro threw himself upon him and bore him to the ground.

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CHAPTER XI.

UNDER THE BRITISH FLAG AGAIN.

WISELY reasoning that to resist would be only to incense his captor, and cause him to strike a blow that might perchance be fatal, Dick kept perfectly still, and the negro, surprised at this, soon allowed him to rise, and holding him by his brawny right arm, hurried him to the rear, evidently well pleased with his prisoner, whom he judged by his bright uniform to be a person of some consequence.

Dick tried to make him understand that he was not a French officer, but a British midshipman, and therefore not an enemy, but a friend. He found the big fellow knew nothing of the English language, however, and feeling a good deal perturbed as to his fate in the hands of the blacks in their present temper, he prayed fervently for the protection of Providence in his strange position.

The negro conducted him right back to his own

camp, where he handed him over to a detachment of his fellows who were guarding the prisoners, and to the commander of whom he said something that was unintelligible to Dick, but which no doubt meant that the boy was his prisoner, and to take good care of him and not let him escape.

Keenly regretting that he had ever left *La Creole*, where at least he would have been safe however the battle fared, Dick looked round about him. He was one of several hundreds in a similar strait. All were disarmed, many were wounded; and huddled together in a sort of hollow, they were guarded by a detachment of the most villanous-looking caricatures of soldiery he had ever beheld in his life. Not one of them had a complete uniform, a *chapeau* having to suffice one, a tunic another, a pair of striped trousers a third, while a fourth had to be content with a belt buckled over his anything but picturesque rags. Their weapons showed no less variety; and as they stood about in attitudes that were intended to be soldier-like, but were simply grotesque parodies of drill, they made so ridiculous a spectacle that, serious as his situation was, Dick could not help being tickled, although he had the discretion to conceal his amusement, lest it should give offence.

Meantime the noise of battle was rapidly growing fainter, for the blacks were driving the French before them, nor did they cry halt until they had reached the outworks of the city. Then with shouts of defiance and threats of speedy return to storm the city itself, they withdrew to their camp, to recruit and to prepare for another assault.

Back they came over the plain, shouting and singing and dancing in the intoxication of their joy at so signal a victory. They were just in the humour to commit any atrocity, and bethinking himself of what they had done the night before, Dick was full of apprehension. He had tried without success to make himself understood by some of his guards. Either they knew nothing of English, or they pretended not to, and he was fain to cheer himself with the hope that when Dessalines and his staff returned there would be some one among them to whom he could explain his being with the French army.

It was evident that his fellow-prisoners entertained not the slightest hope of receiving any consideration whatever at the hands of their captors. Their own general had set the example of remorseless cruelty, and the blacks had already shown their promptness in following it.

The returning victors brought back with them a fresh batch of prisoners, who were added to those already in custody, and who looked very pitiful in their wounded and bedraggled condition. Perilous as his own position was, Dick almost forgot it in his sympathy for them. Even if they were his hereditary foes, his soul revolted at the thought of their being tortured to death by brutal negroes.

The hours dragged by in harrowing uncertainty until the middle of the afternoon, when Dessalines, having rested and feasted after his hard morning's work, thought fit to amuse himself and his officers by an inspection of the trophies taken. Orders were accordingly sent for the prisoners to be brought before him. When Dick understood this his heart throbbed with hope. Here would be his opportunity. If he could only get the ear of the black commander for a moment, surely all would be right.

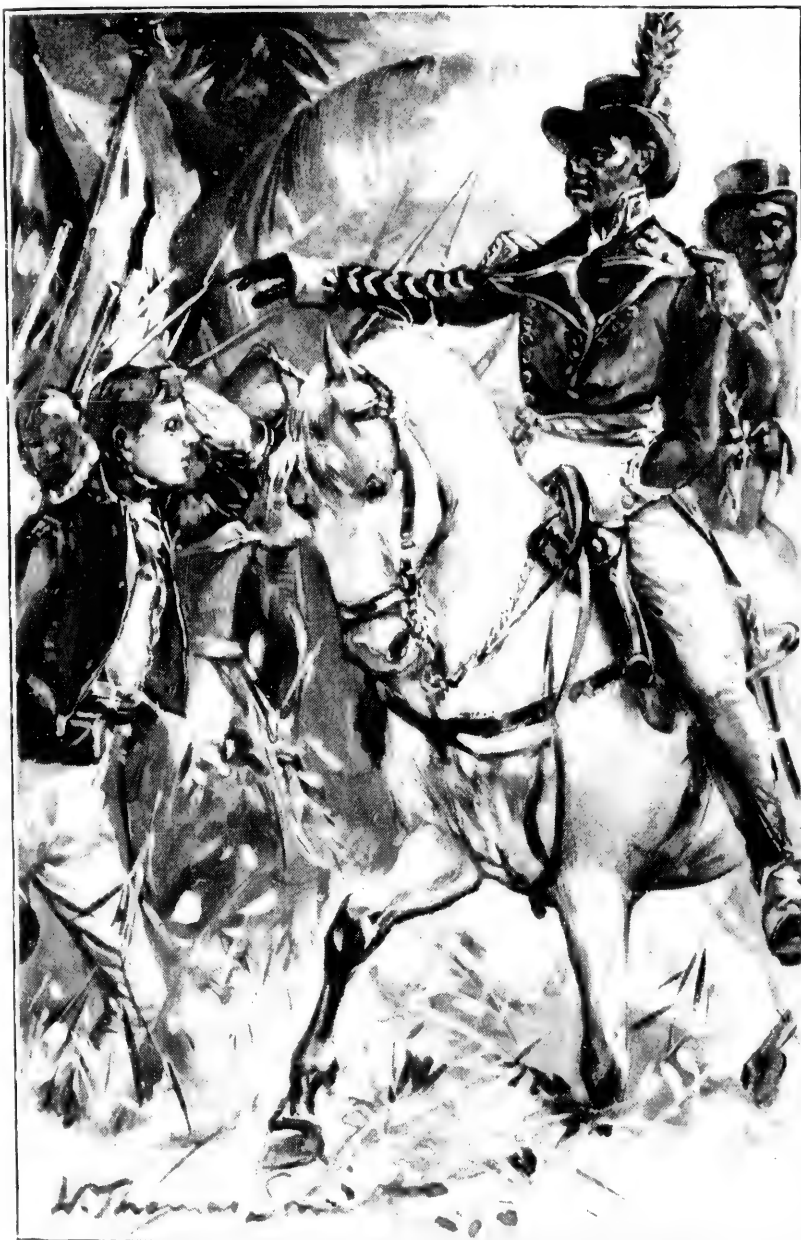
He therefore took pains to get as near the head of the mournful procession as possible, in order that no time might be lost in stating his case. Between two files of jeering negroes, who seemed to be impatient to begin the work of revenge, the unhappy prisoners were marched into the presence of their conqueror, who, mounted upon a richly-caparisoned horse and

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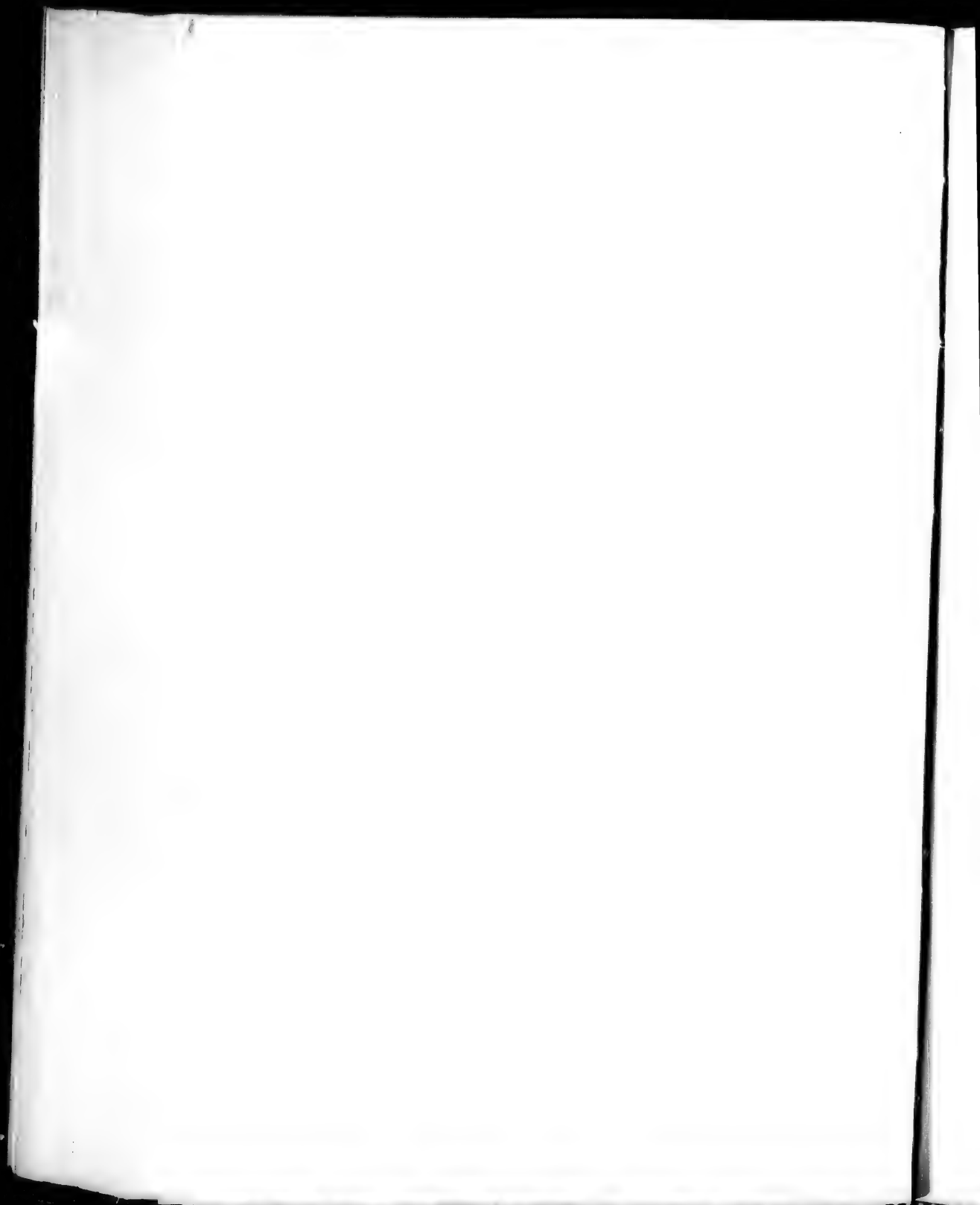
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"Struck by the boy's appearance, he reared back the officers."



supported on either side by a brilliant staff, regarded them with a smile of sardonic satisfaction, from time to time pointing out some one that particularly attracted his attention, and making remarks that were hugely relished by his satellites.

Dick had his mind clearly made up as to his course of action, and not for a second did he hesitate to carry it out. Just as he came opposite Dessalines, by a sudden movement he broke away from his guards and darted up to the general, who, fearing some attack, clapped his hand upon his sword, while his staff closed in to defend him if need be.

But Dick had no weapon in his hand, and all he sought to do was to reach the general's stirrup, and to look up pleadingly into his face, saying,—

"Sir, I am not a French officer; I am a British officer, and I was a prisoner of the French when your soldiers captured me."

Struck by the boy's appearance, he waved back the officers who were eager to thrust him away, and asked him in French what he was saying. Now poor Dick knew nothing of French, and could only repeat his appeal in English, which the man who held his life in his hands evidently did not understand. Shaking his head to indicate this, Dessalines turned to his staff

and asked a question, in response to which one of them came forward, evidently proud of a chance to distinguish himself. He was one of those cosmopolitan soldiers of fortune that are sure to be found in the thick of any revolutionary movement, and he had an equal acquaintance with French, Spanish, and English. Looking sharply into Dick's face, he said,—

“His highness does not understand you. What were you saying to him?”

Dick once more repeated the statement that he had made; whereupon the officer pricked up his ears, and proceeded to ask a number of questions as to the ship to which he belonged, how he came to be taken prisoner and to be on the field of battle,—all of which Dick answered promptly and fully.

His replies evidently produced a deep impression upon his questioner, for, approaching General Des-salines, he held an earnest consultation with him, the result of which Dick awaited with keen anxiety.

After a few moments of this he turned again to Dick, and said in a not unpleasant voice,—

“His highness is pleased to consider it advisable to look into what you have stated, and you may in the meantime remain here.”

With a huge sigh of relief, Dick, feeling confident

that to gain time was to improve his chances of escape, made his way to the rear of the group of officers, where he had an opportunity to "pull himself together," so to speak, after the exciting events of the day, while the review of the prisoners was being completed.

When it was all over, the officer who had questioned him directed him to follow in his wake as he made his way to the general's tent, where a fuller inquiry was to be held; and a few minutes later Dick found himself once more in the presence of the commander-in-chief of the blacks.

Dessalines was a full-blooded negro. In fact, he had been brought from Africa as a slave. But when his brothers in servitude rose in revolt against their French masters, he displayed such qualities of leadership as to quickly bring him to the front. Under his command the black army won a series of victories, of which the crowning one was that of the morning. He was now practically master of the situation, and his former rulers had nothing left but to make the best terms of capitulation they could with him. Renowned as he was for ferocity no less than for fearlessness, the prospects of anything like favourable terms were far from brilliant, and no one knew this

better than General Rochambeau, now driven to take refuge behind the defences of the city.

Brought face to face with the famous negro, Dick lifted up his eyes and met squarely, yet not boldly, the gaze that was fixed upon him. The general was richly dressed, and really looked very imposing, supported as he was by a numerous staff, who evidently stood in considerable awe of him. His countenance bore the stamp of energy and determination to a degree rarely seen in one of his race, and was not at all unpleasing when he smiled.

Evidently he was in high good-humour, and summoning the officer who had previously interpreted to his side, he proceeded to examine Dick with a vivacity and intelligence that gave evidence of no mean intellectual capacity.

Dick responded frankly and promptly to every inquiry, and had no difficulty in perceiving that he was making a favourable impression upon the man who held his life in his hands. Finally, his mind seeming to be quite satisfied, Dessalines informed him through the interpreting officer that he need no longer consider himself a prisoner, but would remain with the blacks until an opportunity offered of putting him on board one of the British vessels.

What a bound of joy Dick's heart gave when he understood this, and how fervently he gave thanks in his heart to God for so graciously protecting him! Not only was he to suffer no harm at the hands of the blacks, but he was to be delivered from the French also, and returned to his own people as soon as possible.

Overcome with gratitude he sprang forward, and seizing the general's hand shook it warmly, exclaiming,—

“God bless you, sir! How can I thank you?”

Dessalines laughed as he released his hand, and having had Dick's words explained to him, said very graciously,—

“The British are my friends; I wish nothing but good to the British. You will be treated like my own son so long as you are with us.”

It was true that the British were the friends of the blacks in their struggle for freedom. They had supplied them with ammunition on more than one occasion, and might have afforded them more assistance had they not been so much occupied in looking after their own interests.

That night Dick dined with the general in state, and as, with mind perfectly at ease and a splendid

appetite, he gave an appreciative attention to the feast, he thought to himself,—

“ Well, what a wonderful world this is! This time yesterday with the staff of the French general as a prisoner of war, and now with the staff of the black general as an honoured guest. Won't Tenderly open his eyes when he hears all about it; and won't old Bulstrode scowl at my having such a time! And mother—my dear, precious mother—how will I ever get the time to tell her all about it? She must be wondering now if I'm still alive, it's so long since I had a chance to send her a letter.”

The feeling of security after his many vicissitudes was most pleasant, and he would have been in quite a happy frame of mind but for thinking of the unfortunate French prisoners and the dreadful fate that they were perhaps already suffering. Yet he was powerless to help in any way whatever, and could no more than hope that more clemency might be shown them by the blacks than they had shown towards their prisoners.

The following morning General Dessalines, now stronger than ever—for nothing succeeds like success—gathered his forces for a combined attack upon the city; and notwithstanding the very gallant defence

made by the French, passed through the outer fortifications and broke down the blockhouses, so that by nightfall the city itself was at his mercy. One more day's fighting and the conquest of the former masters of the island would be complete.

Realizing this, General Rochambeau opened negotiations without further delay. Had he done this three days earlier, he might have obtained some sort of consideration from the black commander-in-chief. But his resistance and the cruelty shown to his prisoners had exasperated Dessalines to such a pitch, that he would allow only ten days for the French to completely evacuate the place, and get away in ships as best they could.

Now, including seamen and soldiers, there were nearly ten thousand men to be thus removed—a task which seemed quite impossible of accomplishment; and, as a matter of fact, the ten days passed without a single vessel having left the harbour. On the eleventh day, Dessalines, who had all the forts in his possession, sent word to Rochambeau that if the vessels did not sail on the following day, he would fire upon them with red-hot shot.

This message thoroughly alarmed the French, who had indeed been delaying in the hope of assist-

ance arriving; and they were putting forth every effort to get away, when, on the morning of the twelfth day, the British man-of-war *Theseus* came into the harbour, having been despatched by Commodore Loring, in command of the squadron cruising in those waters, to see how matters stood, and if necessary intervene for the protection of the conquered.

Dick was in one of the forts watching the frantic preparations of the French for departure; and when he saw the *Theseus* bearing in under a full press of sail, with the beloved British colours flying at her mast-head, he sprang upon the parapet, and waving his cap, hurrahed at the top of his voice. Never before had the flag of dear old England seemed so beautiful an object; and the noble ship herself cleaving the blue bosom of the harbour, how surpassingly finer she looked than any of the French vessels, whose decks were now the scenes of such confusion!

He felt as if he must get on board without delay, and with the permission of the officer in charge of the fort, at once set off in search of General Dessalines. Happily he found him just as he was preparing to send one of his chief officials off to the *Theseus*, and thinking it well to make a good impres-

sion at the start, he very willingly consented to Dick's accompanying the officer.

Thus it came about that in half-an-hour Dick once more stood upon the well-holystoned oaken planks that to him stood in the place of his native soil, and was the centre of a group of sub-lieutenants and midshipmen, who shook his hand and clapped him warmly on the back, and deluged him with questions anent his experiences among the French and the blacks.

Keenly did Master Richard enjoy being the centre of such lively interest, and in a merry fashion did his tongue wag while Dessalines' envoy was in close consultation with Captain Bligh in the cabin. He made his listeners laugh heartily as he detailed in his own graphic fashion the different incidents of the past month, and they were unanimous in envying him his adventures now that he had come out of them unscathed.

Presently Captain Bligh came on deck, and Dick was brought up and introduced to him. The veteran sailor, who thought there was nothing more admirable in the world than true British pluck, grasped his hand warmly, and retained it in his grip while he said so that all around could hear,—

“And so you are Midshipman Holland, of whom



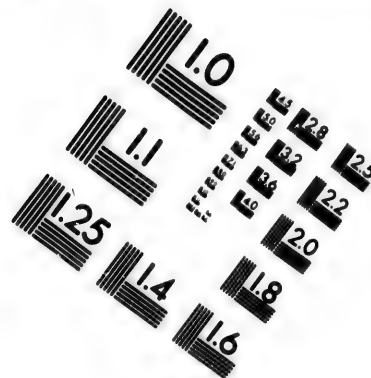
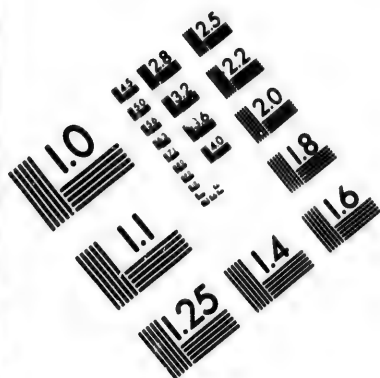
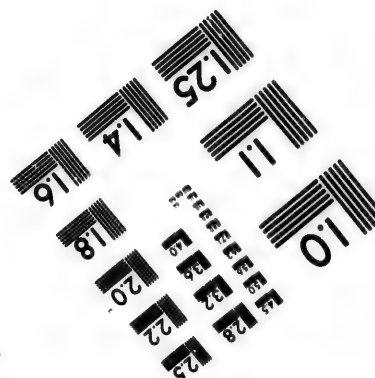
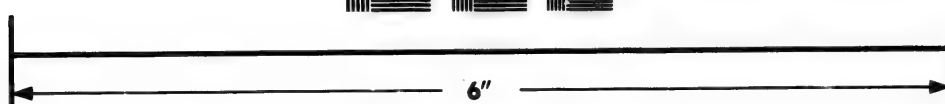
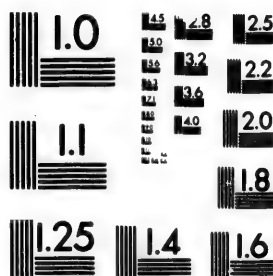


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General Dessalines' representative speaks so highly! Let me say to you how heartily welcome on board my ship is any one who bears himself with so much credit to the flag he serves. You have done honour to the service, sir; and I shall take pleasure in reporting the facts to your own captain, so that they may be duly acknowledged."

Dick blushed to the roots of his hair with pride and pleasure at this hearty praise, and took pains to prove his gratitude by speaking warmly of General Dessalines and his staff, and of the kindness with which they had treated him. He also let Captain Bligh understand how critical was the situation, and how timely his arrival had been in view of Dessalines' expressed determination to shower red-hot shot upon every French vessel remaining in the harbour at sundown.

When Captain Bligh heard this he at once determined to intervene in the interests of humanity, and ordering his gig to be launched, took two of his chief officers with him as he went to return in person the call made by the black commander's envoy upon him.

He found Dessalines hard to move at first; but he was not to be gainsaid, and eventually succeeded in

gaining a three days' extension of time, which enabled the unfortunate French to pack themselves on board their vessels in some sort of fashion, and get away from the island, which would never again be subservient to their sway.

This happily accomplished, the *Theseus*, in her turn, set sail, bound for Kingston, Jamaica, there to report how matters stood in San Domingo, and to await further orders. Dick hailed with delight the idea of getting back to Kingston; and eager as he was to see his shipmates again, and to learn how it had fared with *La Ressource*, he also cherished the hope that the *Gryphon* would not put in an appearance for a while, as he wanted to see some more of his delightful friends, who had treated him so kindly before.

It is not a long sail from San Domingo to Jamaica, and in spite of a strong south-wester the *Theseus* made good progress, for she was a speedy ship, and Captain Bligh knew how to get the utmost out of her. On the way a suspicious sail was sighted, and run down after a three hours' chase—with the result that still another was added to the rapidly lengthening list of privateers fitted out at Guadeloupe to wage war upon British commerce.

When the prize crew was being made up, Captain Bligh sent for Dick, and, more in a joke than in earnest, asked him if he wanted to try another trip in a French privateer. But Dick politely declined. He had had quite enough of that sort of experience for a while, and was altogether too eager to get to Kingston, where a week or two on shore would be much more to his taste. So he stayed by the *Theseus*, and on the evening of the following day had the pleasure of watching, from his favourite eyry in the main-top, the beautiful panorama of Kingston harbour open up before him as the big ship picked her way carefully through the intricacies of the channel, and finally came to anchor just as the shadows of night infolded the city and shut it from his view.

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CHAPTER XII.

SCENES ON SHORE.

WHEN Dick came on deck next morning, the first thing he did was to look around for *La Ressource*. At first he could find nothing of her, but presently, after diligent hunting with the aid of a glass, he made her out lying at the far end of the mooring-station, and almost hidden by the bulk of a man-of-war.

Satisfied upon this point, and promising himself to pay her a visit as promptly as possible, he next gave his attention to searching for the *Gryphon*. He hoped as strongly that he would not find her as that he would find the captured privateer, and once more was his hope fulfilled. The *Gryphon*, evidently, was not in port, and he could pretty confidently count upon obtaining shore-going leave until she did turn up.

As soon as breakfast was despatched he applied to

Captain Bligh for permission to rejoin *La Ressource*, which being readily granted, he bade good-bye to his friends on the *Theseus*, hailed one of the boatmen crowding at the foot of the gangway, and had himself rowed over to the privateer, not forgetting to bring worthy old Tom Taffrail along also.

They reached the vessel just as the men were making things ship-shape for the day, Lieutenant Henderson superintending from the poop. Without delaying to ask permission, Dick sprang over the low bulwark, with Taffrail close at his heels, and stood in the midst of their shipmates before the latter realized their arrival.

The sensation their sudden appearance created was certainly as profound as they could have desired. Exclaiming, "Dick Holland, by Jove! How in the name of all the angels did you get here?" Lieutenant Henderson, quite forgetting official dignity, threw himself on Dick and gave him a hug that completely squeezed the breath out of him; while the seamen fairly mobbed Taffrail, wringing his hands, and clapping him on the back, and dancing about him like so many school children.

"Bless my eyes, Taffrail!" cried the lieutenant, as he grasped the boatswain's hand, "but it's good to

see you safe and sound again. We'd made up our minds that you and Master Dick would have a taste of the dungeon at Guadeloupe before you got back. Come into the cabin and let me have the whole story."

It took the best part of the morning for the story to be told, and then Dick got a chance to ask about the *Gryphon*. Much to his satisfaction, he learned that she was not expected for a week yet, and that he would therefore continue a member of the prize crew of *La Ressource* until the frigate appeared. As his duties in this position would be practically nil, he had no hesitation in asking for leave to go on shore, and to remain for a few days if he so desired, which Lieutenant Henderson at once granted; and he accordingly made preparations to go that same afternoon.

He was very eager to see the Wilsons again. Their hospitable mansion was like a home to him now; and since he could not reach his mother to pour into her ears the story of his achievements and of his ambitions, he longed for the sympathy and kindness of Mrs. Wilson, who had taken him into her heart as though her own blood ran in his veins.

He took unusual pains with his toilet, and looked

the very model of a midshipman as he stepped into the boat in which he was rowed ashore. As it happened, the day was the first of the Christmas holidays, when the negro carnival is celebrated; and as the boat neared the landing, there grew louder upon Dick's ears the bray of horns and the thunder of drums, mingled with strains of barbarous music, and accentuated by the yelling of excited negroes. He had never heard anything of the like before, and turned in wonder to the steersman for an explanation. The old sailor shrugged his shoulders to imply that it was nothing new to him.

"The blackies are beginning their high-jinks," said he. "They'll keep it up like that for the best part of a week. Such a precious lot of fools you never saw in your life."

His curiosity being aroused, Dick asked a lot of questions; and the more he heard the more he congratulated himself upon having chanced on shore in time to see such strange doings, so that by the time the boat reached the landing his mind was fully made up to lose nothing of the proceedings that would be worth seeing.

The wharves were already crowded with negroes of both sexes and all sizes, dressed in the best gar-

ments they possessed, and dancing, singing, and shouting with the most contagious heartiness. At the one where Dick landed he found himself at once in the midst of just such a group of the merry-makers as has been so graphically described by "Tom Cringle" in his fascinating "Log."

It was the butcher's John Canoe party, and it certainly more than fulfilled the expectation Dick had been led to form from the statements of the steersman.

The leader of the gang was of course the John Canoe or Jack Pudding, who may be described as the Lord of Misrule in the West Indian negro's Christmas festivities. He was in this instance a light, active young Creole, whose absence of shoes and stockings was amply atoned for by a superabundance of trousers, and an amplitude of blue velvet waistcoat that would have done credit to a London alderman, while on his back was an old blue artillery uniform coat bearing tarnished epaulets, and having at the wrists shining tin frills in lieu of lace that tinkled noisily with every movement of his hands. His head was adorned with an enormous cocked hat, to which was attached in front a white mask having a very sanctimonious expression, while another false face wearing a quizzical

cal grin hung on behind, both being overtopped with a coarse wig made of the hair of bullocks' tails.

This extraordinary creature bore in one hand a white wand and in the other a dirty handkerchief; and after capering about in front of Dick as though to do him honour, he sprang upon the back of a nondescript animal that now advanced capering about in the most grotesque manner possible. He was a huge negro clothed in a white bullock's hide, the whole of the skull being retained, so that the effect of the deep bass voice growling through the jaws of the beast was most startling. His legs were enveloped in the skin of the hind legs, while the arms were cased in that of the fore, the hands protruding a little above the hoofs; and as he walked reared up on his hind legs, he used, in order to support the weight of the John Canoe who had perched on his shoulders like a monkey on a dancing bear, a strong staff with a crotch top to it.

Behind him followed a kind of chorus numbering fifty or more men, all got up in a hardly less outlandish fashion, and these capered about in a way that threatened to tumble themselves or somebody else over the edge of the wharf. The whole party then made a circle around Dick, singing a wild song

the refrain of which seemed to be, "O Buccra, one macarone, please;" and the steersman having translated this into a request for a quarter of a dollar, Dick promptly handed over the coin; whereupon John and his supporters went careering up the street, leaving the way clear for Dick to proceed.

The streets were crowded with people, all arrayed in the "best bib and tucker," and rapid progress through them was out of the question. But Dick was in no hurry. He had the whole day before him, and granted a day's leave and a pocketful of silver, which Dick had also, a healthy, hearty midshipman is one of the happiest and most leisurely mortals alive. So just in the spirit to enter into the humour of the thing to the utmost, Dick sauntered slowly along or halted at some coin of vantage while the group of merry-makers passed him by, his sharp eyes missing nothing that was worth seeing.

All the crafts and trades were represented in the carnival, and had their own John Canoes, horn-blowers, and nondescripts; and the very children had theirs also. But the most attractive part of the extraordinary exhibition was the Set Girls, as they were called. These were bands of girls, each containing from fifteen to thirty, that danced along

the streets singing in excellent time and tune. There were black sets and brown sets, and sets of all the intermediate gradations of colour of countenance. Each set was dressed precisely alike, and carried parasols of similar size and colour, held stylishly above their showy toques or Madras handkerchiefs, all of the same pattern, that were deftly wound around their heads.

Many of the girls were very handsome creatures, particularly those in the brown set, and Dick, who had no lack of appreciation of feminine charms, watched them with great interest, wondering what they would be like in a drawing-room, and whether they had intelligence in proportion to their beauty.

When they had finally disappeared down the long street, there was a brief lull in the joyous uproar, and then came a loud burst of military music. Dick had by this time reached the parade-ground that occupied the centre of the city, and he saw approaching through a cloud of dust that reached as high as the house-tops the head of a column of troops, whose swords and bayonets glittered gaily in the glowing sunshine.

"Heigh-ho!" he exclaimed, "what is this? Surely the redcoats don't join in the carnival too!"

Turning to one of the bystanders, he asked the

meaning of this martial display that was drawing near, and learned that it was the city volunteer regiment marching down to the court-house in the lower part of the town to mount the Christmas guard; this precaution being necessary in view of the prevailing drunkenness, and the danger of the negroes breaking out into violence or pillage.

The volunteers presented an excellent appearance as they tramped by in good order headed by a tolerable band. Some of the companies were composed entirely of whites, others of browns, and others still of "ivory blacks,"—all, of course, being free men, as no slaves could be permitted to hold arms.

"Bravo, my boys!" shouted Dick, clapping his hands in token of his admiration.

The exclamation attracted the attention of a group of mounted officers, and on ascertaining its source they all saluted the middy with their swords, at some risk of losing their seats.

Dick responded as gravely as if he had been a commander-in-chief and they were passing before him in review; and the crowd observing the incident, regarded him with great respect, since he had been singled out for special honour by the officers.

By this time the morning was pretty well gone,

and Dick thought it time to betake himself to Mr. Wilson's, where he arrived just as the family were sitting down to lunch. The welcome he received was as cordial as though he had been a long-lost member of the household, and he had a deeply-interested circle of listeners as he related the exciting experiences which had befallen him since they saw him last.

"You won't be long getting your sub-lieutenancy if you continue to distinguish yourself in this way, Holland," said Mr. Wilson, with a smile of warm approval.

Dick smiled radiantly back at him.

"I don't intend to miss any chance of active service," he replied. "It's not overmuch fun being a middy, but once you're a sub you begin to have a good time."

"Aha! the desire for authority. How natural it is! We all want to be on top, don't we?" laughed Mr. Wilson.

"And quite right too," broke in Miss Wilson, coming to Dick's support. "I wouldn't give the snap of my finger for a man who didn't want to get to the front, and I'm not afraid to prophesy that if Mr. Holland lives to be forty he'll be a captain at least, and maybe an admiral."

This hearty expression of confidence in his future pleased Dick immensely, and jumping to his feet he made the fair prophetess a profound bow, saying,—

“You do me very great honour, Miss Wilson. I will promise you to do my best to fulfil your prediction.”

In half-serious, half-humorous conversation of this kind the meal passed pleasantly; and after it was over Mr. Wilson proposed a ride into the country, which admirably suited Dick's inclinations. They set off as soon as the heat of the day had gone by, Dick riding the sturdy little gray which had been his mount before, and spent a delightful afternoon cantering along the shady roads that led towards the Blue Mountains.

Mrs. Wilson gave Dick a very cordial invitation to spend the Christmas week with them if he could get leave, and he returned to his ship that evening promising to do his best to secure the necessary permission.

Thanks to the kind intervention of Lieutenant Henderson, the leave was granted without difficulty; and rejoicing in the conviction that he was one of the luckiest youngsters alive, Dick became, for the time being, a member of the Wilson household.

The tears of joy filled his mother's eyes when she

read the long loving letter that told the doings of that Christmas week, and she could not resist the impulse to express to Mrs. Wilson the gratitude she felt for her kindness to her son. The days were full of delight to the light-hearted boy. The cool of the morning and of the afternoon was given to long rides or drives through the beautiful country surrounding Kingston, and every evening there was a dinner or social gathering of some kind, where Dick found himself the recipient of abundant attention.

A boy of different make might have been spoiled by the treatment he received ; for boys' heads are all too easily turned, and conceit is a plant of rapid growth in a fostering atmosphere.

But Dick was not spoiled, for the simple reason that he never wasted time which might have been much better spent in thinking about himself, and laying the flattering unction to his soul that this thing and that were done just to please him, and that he therefore was a person of no inconsiderable importance. He just went straight ahead with the matter in hand whether it was work or play, not stopping to consider to what particular advantage he appeared, and taking everything as it came in his own cheerful, sanguine way.

The happy week at Wilson's had just come to a close, when one morning Dick, who had gone down to the wharves, observed among the men-of-war at their moorings a new arrival, the sight of which made his heart give a great bound as though it would spring from its place. It was none other than the dear old *Gryphon*, which had come into port at daybreak after a successful cruise in quest of privateers. At once Dick hailed a boatman, and had himself rowed out to the frigate, where his shipmates received him with great enthusiasm; and Captain Fitewell, having received a full account of his conduct during his absence, made him happy by warm commendation, and by the flattering assurance that he was very glad indeed to have him back on board in good order and condition.

Tenderly's demonstrations of delight at his friend's return were a good deal like those of a dog restored to a long-lost master. He fairly capered about for excess of joy, and his eyes for a time were suspiciously moist. The poor chap had been putting in a hard time during Dick's absence. Not only did he miss him sorely, having no other companion to take his place, but Bulstrode, whether he felt freer to exercise his cowardly cruelty because of Dick being away, or sought to vent upon Tenderly the malice he cherished

against both, had lost no opportunity of tormenting him, and thus made his life miserable.

He came up on deck while Dick and Tenderly were talking together after the former's interview with Captain Fitewell, and his ugly face darkened with a hateful scowl that made it a strange contrast to their happy countenances.

Now that his plucky little champion had returned, Tenderly did not feel half so much afraid of the big bully, and as the latter passed them he held up his head in a way that was hardly less comical than it was pathetic to any one who understood their mutual relations. The change in his bearing, slight as it was, did not escape the notice of Bulstrode, who scowled more fiercely than ever, and with a volley of oaths by way of relieving his feelings went on his way, muttering something to the effect that he wasn't through with those puppies yet.

The first lieutenant was very glad to see Dick again.

"We've quite missed you, my lad," said he, as he shook him warmly by the hand. "As soon as we can have a few minutes to ourselves, you must tell me all about yourself and the fine time you've been having."

The opportunity came after dinner that evening, when, neither of them being on duty, Mr. M'Kinstry invited Dick into his own cabin, and listened with deep interest to all he had to tell.

"I quite envy you your experience, Dick," said the first lieutenant. "You've been in rare luck, especially seeing that you came out of it all right. And now, I suppose, you'll find it hard to settle down to routine duty on the old ship, won't you?"

"Oh no, sir," responded Dick; "I'm very glad to be back. Only I do hope there'll be lots of cruising around, and that we won't be much of the time in port. It's fine fun chasing the privateers."

Mr. M'Kinstry smiled at the boy's enthusiasm.

"We won't spend much time in port so long as Bony's fleet is in the West Indies; and from all accounts it's getting stronger every week, so that we're likely to have all the work we can attend to, for some months to come at any rate."

CHAPTER XIII.

HUNTING PRIVATEERS.

M R. M'KINSTRY'S expectations did not remain long unfulfilled. The very afternoon of the day of Dick's return orders came from the admiral to have the frigate put in readiness for sea with the least possible delay, and as this meant work for everybody on board, Dick had to send a note to the Wilsons explaining the situation, apologizing for not returning to bid them good-bye, and promising to report himself at their house as soon as the *Gryphon* got back to Kingston.

The reason for this sudden ordering of the frigate to sea again was that intimation had been received of the fitting out of a number of French privateers in the eastern ports of the island of Cuba, and the *Gryphon* being one of the best-equipped and fastest-sailing vessels in the fleet, was deputed to endeavour

to intercept them before they had time to do any damage.

It took the whole of the next day to get on board the stores and ammunition necessary for a long cruise, so that it was the morning of the day after before the good ship hoisted sail, and, slipping out of Kingston harbour, made her way around Morant Point into the broad stretch of sea which separates the island of Jamaica from her stately sister the splendid island of Cuba.

From Captain Fitewell down to the youngest galley-boy, everybody on board shared in the feelings of anticipation and excitement. There was no knowing what the near future had in store. The sea swarmed with French vessels—the most of them an easy prey for the *Gryphon*, with her heavy thirty-twos, it was true; but there were others of much greater size and weight of metal, and if one of these was encountered some stiff fighting was certain to ensue.

Now a hard-fought contest meant opportunities for distinguishing oneself, and for being mentioned in the despatches; but it also meant no less the possibility of being gashed by a splinter, or having a limb, and perchance a head, carried away by a round shot, not to mention having one's body made a target for small

arms. So that there were two aspects of the matter, both of which had to be considered by thoughtful, far-seeing folk.

Yet no one, unless indeed it were poor Tenderly, who would always much prefer being in port to being out at sea, and to whom the piping times of peace were far more welcome than the "alarms and excursions" of war, felt any disposition to regret being sent on their perilous mission. Officers and men alike welcomed the prospect of lively times, with the chance of a good bit of prize-money at the end of them.

The destination Captain Fitewell had in view was the port of Santiago de Cuba, at the south-eastern end of the island. Towards this he worked carefully, a sharp look-out being kept for suspicious craft coming from any quarter. Dick, as usual, spent the most of the time that he was not on watch during the day up in the main-top, where, with the aid of a glass loaned him by the first lieutenant, he swept the horizon in search of strange sails. But his diligence went without reward until the frigate was off Santiago, and then he had the satisfaction of reporting the presence of four French schooners, evidently armed, and ready for mischief.

Captain Fitewell was apparently pleased at this,

and as he could not enter the port to make the capture, decided to watch it very narrowly, in case the schooners would endeavour to make their escape therefrom.

For several days the frigate knocked about the neighbourhood, tacking to and fro or lying to, according as the wind served. But no schooners appeared; and the captain, denouncing the law that denied him the privilege of sailing straight into the harbour and taking the schooners without more ado, was beginning to grow very impatient, and to consider the propriety of trying some other field, when Tenderly's opportunity to find favour in his eyes came, and the boy did not fail to take advantage of it.

It happened this way. He was on watch just as daylight broke, and there being nothing particular for him to do, he climbed up into the main-top to look about him. He had hardly glanced around when his eyes fell upon three of the schooners creeping cautiously along the shore with the aid of their sweeps.

At once he raised the cry of "Sail, ho!" and scrambled down to report what he had seen. All hands were immediately called on deck, and the yards crowded with canvas to make the most of the light morning breeze.

At first it seemed as if the schooners would get away before the breeze grew strong enough to enable the frigate to catch up with them; but as the sun rose the wind freshened, and presently the big vessel was bowling along after the little ones at a rate that would soon bring her upon them. When they perceived this they parted company, one going about so as to sail due west, while the other two continued on their course due east.

"Aha!" laughed Captain Fitewell; "they flatter themselves they're going to play fox on me. But perhaps I'll disappoint them."

Steering after the two which had kept together, he rapidly overhauled them, and the moment he came within range let fly at them with his bow chasers. The gunner's aim was good—the heavy shot reached their marks; and without waiting to be knocked into kindling wood, one of the schooners went up into the wind and hauled down her flag in token of surrender, while the other tried the desperate tactic of doubling, with the result that she ran on shore, in such a position that she must inevitably become a total wreck.

Sending a prize crew on board the one which had surrendered, Captain Fitewell, without losing a minute, turned about and set off in pursuit of the third

schooner, which by this time had so long a head start that her capture seemed almost out of the question.

But he was not a man to be easily shaken off. The wind had now risen into a pretty stiff blow, and the *Gryphon* fairly snored through the water under the pressure of a cloud of canvas, the studding-sails swelling out as though they would burst their snowy bosoms, and the royals bending the tips of the masts like fishing-rods.

Slowly but surely the schooner was overhauled, although in his anxiety to escape her captain carried so much canvas that she went ploughing through the waves instead of lifting over them, and it seemed every minute as if the main-mast must go by the board or the sail be blown from the booms.

Perched in the main-top, Dick watched the chase with breathless interest. He felt towards these privateers as a hunter does towards wolves and panthers. They were the beasts of prey of the seas, and to be treated accordingly. No questioning as to the rightfulness of driving them from the face of the seas ever entered his mind. He could not, of course, show any undue severity to those who manned them as individuals, but taken collectively they were the ob-

jects of his righteous indignation, and he was eager to give them hard knocks at every opportunity.

It was after mid-day before the frigate got within range of the schooner, and even then the latter kept on her course in sheer desperation. Somewhat reluctantly, therefore—for he would have preferred capturing her uninjured—Captain Fitewell gave orders for the gunners to aim at the masts and rigging. The first few shots did little damage, but presently old Taffrail sent one whistling through the air that by a happy chance smashed the main-boom, and effectually spoiled the schooner's sailing. A minute later she struck her colours, and a prize crew went on board to take possession.

Entirely satisfied with his day's work, Captain Fitewell now retraced his course, so as to pick up the other captured schooner; and then the damage to the one Taffrail hit having been repaired sufficiently to enable her to get along, he started back for Kingston, to hand his prizes over and to take back the men he had put on board them.

But as luck would have it, the work of that cruise was not yet completed. About one o'clock of the following day a brig was observed coming along shore, which soon after hauled her wind to speak a schooner

which had been avoiding the frigate all the morning. The captain at once determined to look into the character of both vessels, and signalling to the schooners to keep on their course towards Jamaica, he turned his prow in the other direction. There was a strong breeze blowing at the time, and about three o'clock the brig and schooner bore up together, under all sail, evidently full of fight.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Dick, whose watch it was, and who was studying their every move with eager interest. "They're not going to run away this time; they're going to try a tussle with us."

In order to meet them to the best advantage, the *Gryphon* stood off until certain of fetching them, and then made sail inshore, keeping within half-a-mile of the shore, under a heavy press of canvas.

Rearing and dipping in the white caps the brig came gallantly up, her decks crowded with armed men, and her bulwarks pierced for eighteen guns. If well handled and properly supported by the schooner, she could hardly fail to prove a troublesome customer, as all on board the frigate began to realize.

A few minutes after four o'clock she had come within range, and, as if impatient for the fray, veered from her course sufficiently to allow a broadside to be

fired. The eighteen-pound balls whistled threateningly through the air; but the aim of the gunners was poor, and beyond the cutting of a few unimportant ropes in the upper rigging, the *Gryphon* suffered no damage.

The brig then attempted to cross the *Gryphon's* hawse—a very clever manœuvre, and one that would have given her a great advantage. But Captain Fitewell was an old sailor, and too experienced a fighter to be caught napping. Although tearing along at the rate of fully eight knots, he ordered the helm to be put hard aport, so as to board the brig, and at the same time let fly a broadside from his thirty-two pounders that brought his opponent's top-hamper of studding-sails, top-sails, etc., tumbling upon the deck in a perfect shower of yards and blocks and ropes.

“Hurrah! hurrah!” cried Dick again, fairly dancing with delight at the effect of the broadside. “We can teach Master Frenchie how to aim straight. What’s he going to do now with his rigging in such a mess?”

The commander of the brig seemed at first completely bewildered as to what to do, and the *Gryphon's* boats were just about to be lowered, when the

other vessel, to the surprise of those on board the frigate, luffed up, and ran straight for the rocks in a small bay, striking the reef and her colours at almost the same moment.

The *Gryphon*, following hard after her, narrowly escaped a similar fate, and was only saved by heaving in stays. As it was, when, after a few moments of breathless suspense, she wore round and went off on the port tack, her stern was nearly in the breakers.

"Bless my eyes! but that was a close shave," said Lieutenant Henderson to Dick, as the latter stood beside him, trembling in every limb with the excitement of the moment. "I thought we would strike that time, for sure."

Dick broke into a laugh to conceal his perturbation as he answered,—

"So was I, sir; and I was just wondering what would happen to us if we did go ashore. Perhaps a whole crowd of these privateers would come along and make us surrender while we were stuck here helpless."

"It's probably just about what would happen, Dick," returned the sub-lieutenant; "for I believe the rascals fairly swarm around here, and they'd show us small mercy if they did catch us in such a fix."

As the frigate came about she fired a broadside into the brig; for Captain Fitewell felt bound to destroy her since he could not take her. To leave her as she was would simply mean that the French would float her off at their leisure, and after being repaired she would resume her mission of injury to British commerce.

Presently she hoisted her ensign again, in evident defiance of her assailant, and her boats carried her men ashore, where they lined the beach, and were ready to pour volleys of musketry upon any boats that might venture to board the brig.

Nevertheless Captain Fitewell, piqued at this piece of bravado, determined to show the French that they would not play such pranks with impunity, and accordingly orders were given for the boats to be lowered at once.

The command gave great delight on board the *Gryphon*, and despite the manifest danger from the fire of musketry, both officers and men pressed forward, eagerly seeking to be sent. Dick was among the volunteers; and his friend the sub-lieutenant being given command of one of the largest boats, he begged him for a place.

Mr. Henderson was only too glad to have him.

He had already had experience of his courage and coolness, and promptly assented. As it happened, Dick had just gone off to get his arms when Bulstrode proffered the same request. Now Mr. Henderson had no liking for Bulstrode, and, moreover, the complement for his boat was already made up; so he answered somewhat curtly, "No, Bulstrode; I have all the men I want. Try and get into some other boat," and turned away to give his attention to getting ready.

Boiling over with rage and envy, Bulstrode rushed into the gun-room, where he knew Dick was, and without the slightest apparent provocation poured upon him a flood of the coarsest abuse. Dick was a "sneak," a "toady," a "spy," and many other things not less objectionable, each brutal epithet being garnished with oaths to make it still more aggravating.

In the high state of excitement that Dick was in, this unexpected and unprovoked attack at first bewildered him. Then, as he saw the other middies laughing in an amused way, and evidently enjoying the scene, his anger suddenly rose to white heat. On the floor beside him lay a heavy boot that one of the officers had taken off. Stooping down he picked

this up, and let it fly with all his force straight at Bulstrode's face. His aim was perfect, and his action so quick that the bully, taken unawares, had no time to ward off the missile, and the heavy heel struck him full in the forehead. With a fearful oath he staggered back upon a bench beside him, while Dick fled to the upper deck, and the boat being already lowered, he sprang in, knowing well that Bulstrode would not dare to follow him thither.

The next minute the boat pulled off for the brig, and Dick forgot everything in the excitement of the enterprise. This was no mere pleasure trip by any means. Although the brig appeared to be deserted, the shore behind her was lined with armed men, whose muskets began to speak even before the boats came within range; and the splash of the bullets around them warned the daring sailors that they could hardly expect to get off scathless.

Yet on they pressed, rowing as steadily as if practising for a race; and even when one of the men in the bow was hit, and had to give up his oar, another took his place without a word, and the cutter never lost speed. The nearer they got to the stranded vessel the heavier grew the fire of musketry, and it

was little short of a miracle that more of them were not hit. But the French, happily, were very poor marksmen; and with only two men slightly wounded they dashed alongside the brig, where they were entirely protected for the time.

Dick was the first one to set foot on the slanting deck of the abandoned vessel, and as with some difficulty he made sure his balance, he took off his cap and waved it triumphantly, shouting,—

“Hurrah for old England! One more prize for the *Gryphon*, and a fine one too.”

Taking care not to expose themselves to the bullets from the shore, Lieutenant Henderson and his men proceeded to make an examination of the vessel, in order to see if there were any chance of getting her off the reef and repairing her for service under the union-jack. When this was completed they gathered in a group by the main-chains to discuss the situation, the marksmen on the beach in the meantime keeping up a continuous fusillade, although it was nothing better than a sheer waste of powder and bullets.

The sub-lieutenant announced the result of the inspection.

“It’s too bad, my hearties, but I’m afraid we’ve

run the gauntlet for nothing. There's no chance of getting the brig off. She's badly hogged, and would sink the moment she got back into deep water. The best thing we can do is to set her on fire, and get back to our ship as quickly as possible."

There were many exclamations of regret at this decision, but no one could question its soundness. If the brig were burned there would of course be no prize-money, and the men who had risked their lives to board her must fain be content with the satisfaction to be derived from the destruction of a dangerous enemy to British commerce.

It is an easy thing to set a ship on fire, and in a few minutes the flames were leaping from the hold of the brig, and greedily licking the foot of the main-mast. Mr. Henderson shrewdly ordered the boats to stay alongside until the volume of smoke was sufficient to materially mask their retreat, and in this way, and by dint of vigorous rowing, they got out of range without any further casualties.

Just as they reached the *Gryphon* the masts of the brig went over the side with a startling crash; and by the time that the frigate had got well under way there was nothing left but the smoking skeleton of what had only a few hours before been a saucy

privateer mounting eighteen long eighteen-pounders, and carrying a crew of a hundred men.

Shortly after Dick returned to the *Gryphon* he was sent for by Captain Fitewell. His thoughts being still engrossed with the privateer and her destruction, he took it for granted that he was to be asked something in reference to that subject, and was completely taken aback when the captain, regarding him with a look of unwonted sternness, said,—

“Mr. Holland, I am informed that just previous to your going off in the cutter with Mr. Henderson you threw a heavy boot at Mr. Bulstrode, and injured him severely in the face. Is that information correct?”

CHAPTER XIV.

GOOD FOR EVIL.

AT the captain's grave, searching question, Dick flushed crimson. Until that moment Bulstrode had been entirely out of his mind since the cutter pushed off to board the privateer. But now the recollection of his rash, reckless act of temper came full upon him, and with it a poignant apprehension that the injury inflicted had been of a far more serious nature than he ever intended or desired.

"I did, sir," he replied, his countenance, that was ever as open as a book, revealing the mingled feelings of contrition for his misdeed and anxiety for its victim which possessed his heart, "and I'm very, very sorry. And oh, sir, is he very much hurt?"

"The surgeon says it's quite a nasty cut," responded Captain Fitewell. "Will you be good enough to explain how you came to be guilty of such misconduct?"

The flush on Dick's face, which had given way to a no less unwonted pallor as the gravity of the position revealed itself, now returned with increased emphasis, for he felt himself to be in a strait betwixt two as he had never been in his life before.

In order to make clear to Captain Fitewell the causes which had led up to his sudden outburst of anger, it would be necessary to appear in the rôle of an informer, and from this he shrank with liveliest loathing. Yet, on the other hand, if he kept silence his action might be construed to his serious discredit; and full of contrition as he was for having yielded to the impulse which sent the boot flying through the air, still he did not want to suffer beyond his deserts, particularly as he had been getting on so well of late.

Struck by his evident discomposure, the captain said in a more moderate tone,—

"You need not hesitate to state precisely what took place. It is your duty to give me the information."

Still Dick was silent, and gave an appealing look towards the first lieutenant, as though to say,—

"You understand me—you know why I don't want to tell; won't you please explain to Captain Fitewell?"

"I think I know why Holland is reluctant to answer your inquiries in the way you desire. He does not want to do anything that would seem like informing. Perhaps I can help to make the matter plain."

He then proceeded to tell all he knew of Bulstrode's petty persecution of both Dick and Tenderly, beginning with the scene he had witnessed the first day of Dick's coming on board, and concluding with the statement that Dick was the only one of the midshipmen who stood up properly against the bully.

It was evident from the expression of Captain Fitewell's countenance as he listened to the first lieutenant that what he heard was altogether new to him, and revealed a condition of things which put Dick's conduct in quite a different light.

"I am very glad you have told me this, Mr. M'Kinstry," said he, with a dignified inclination of his head towards Dick's advocate. "I had no thought of such doings on board my ship, and shall take measures to put a stop to them at once.—As to you, sir," turning to Dick, "what Mr. M'Kinstry has said presents at least some justification for your breach of discipline. At the same time, you cannot be per-

mitted to take the law into your own hands in such a fashion, and I will consider what penalty to impose. You may go now."

Dick retired in a very unhappy frame of mind. He felt that the displeasure of his captain was well grounded, and that any sentence he might impose would be fully deserved. Moreover, it was the first time since he joined the *Gryphon* that he had been before Captain Fitewell for misconduct, and the disgrace of it hurt him sorely. Yet even stronger than these causes of mental trouble was the feeling of genuine contrition for the blow, and of desire to make reparation at any cost, if that were possible.

He at once hastened to inquire about Bulstrode, and learning that he was in the gun-room nursing his injured head, proceeded thither, determined to lose no time in making an ample apology. He found the big fellow curled up in the most comfortable corner, with a bandage about his forehead and a pipe in his mouth, reading a tattered novel. Several of the other midshipmen were lounging about on the chairs or studying their lessons at the table.

It was no easy thing for Dick to swallow his pride and go to his tormentor as a suppliant for pardon before so many spectators, and it took all his

strength of mind to carry him through. Indeed, only the clear conviction that it was his duty as a Christian to thus confess himself in error and offer a sincere apology gave him the necessary resolution. As it was, his voice trembled and hardly made itself heard when, having reached Bulstrode's side, he said,—

“I want to apologize to you, Bulstrode, for throwing that boot at you. I am very sorry, and I hope that your hurt is not very bad.”

For a moment or two Bulstrode went on reading as though he had heard nothing, while Dick stood there feeling far more wretched than he had in the presence of Captain Fitewell.

Then the attention of all in the room having been attracted, which was just what Bulstrode desired, and he having got his wits together and thought out what he would say, let his book fall slowly into his lap, gave a huge yawn that was made for the occasion, and affecting a drawl that was intended to put more stress into his words, regarded Dick with a look of most aggravating insolence as he said,—

“The little man is sorry, is he; and he won't do it again? He's found that good little Christians shouldn't throw big boots at other people's heads.”

Then raising his voice so as to make it distinctly audible, although in the strained silence of the room not a word he had spoken had been lost—"Do you hear him, fellows? He's begging my pardon, and promising not to be such a naughty little boy again. Shall we kiss and be friends? What do you say?"

The words themselves were not so aggravating as the tone in which they were uttered, and the brutal leer that accompanied the speaker's utterance. A crimson flush suffused Dick's face, and his hands unconsciously clinched themselves into fists, while his eyes flashed fiercely and his teeth set tightly. He did not hear the murmur of disgust that arose from the other midshipmen, nor the significant turning of their backs which constituted the only reply they deigned to give to Bulstrode's challenge. His whole soul was absorbed in the struggle to keep back the burning words that seemed to throb within him. Twice they almost burst forth, and twice by a heroic effort he held them back. Then, not daring to trust himself any further, he threw back his head as though to say, "It's no use—I can do no more," and turning on his heel left the gun-room amid a decided murmur of sympathy. Bulstrode burst into

a loud, harsh laugh, as if he thought the affair an excellent joke, although in his heart he realized he had borne himself conspicuously ill, and that so far as the good opinion of their associates was concerned, Dick beyond all question carried off the advantage.

In a strange tumult of emotion Dick made his way to his eyry in the main-top, where, secure from all observation, he could give vent to the feelings that would no longer be controlled. He was cut to the heart by what he considered the humiliation he had undergone, and not even the conviction that in offering the apology he had done only what was his simple duty as a Christian gave him much comfort.

He had not been there long before Tenderly came up, full of sympathy and eager to put the whole business in a far more favourable light than Dick was disposed to do. They talked together until sundown, and by that time Dick had come to a much more composed state of mind, so that he looked and felt much more like himself when he made his appearance at the dinner-table.

The affair had one good result, at all events. It put a complete stop to Bulstrode's tormenting tactics; for Captain Fitewell gave him clearly to understand

that he would be watched thenceforth, and at the slightest attempt to repeat any of them would be dismissed from the ship immediately. Knowing the captain to be a man of his word, Bulstrode took heed to the injunction, and contented himself with scowling fiercely at Dick and Tenderly whenever they happened to meet face to face.

Meantime the *Gryphon* continued her cruise in search of privateers with varying success, and there was plenty of work for every officer and sailor on board. Her supply of fresh water giving out, she put into the port of Santiago de Cuba to refill the casks, and it was while there that the occasion presented itself for Dick to give a striking illustration of the spirit his Master in the sermon on the mount demanded of those who entered his service.

The harbour fairly swarmed with sharks, and Bulstrode one morning sought to gratify his propensity for inflicting suffering by fishing for them with a shark-line. Presently he hooked a big fellow weighing several hundred pounds, and found himself in sore straits as to managing the monster. He was too proud, however, to call any one to help him, and did his best to carry on the struggle alone.

His position was on the little platform at the fore-

chains, whence the lead is cast. Not a very secure place from which to angle for sharks; but it was not Bulstrode's way to carefully consider consequences. The shark walloped about wildly, tugging for freedom with tremendous strength; and realizing that he had undertaken a task beyond his powers, Bulstrode endeavoured to give the line a couple of turns around the iron hand-rail which protected the platform.

While so doing, the shark, somehow or other, in the course of its frantic rushes succeeded in getting the line across his chest, and at the same moment giving a tug that no human strength could withstand. Taken completely unawares, Bulstrode let go the line and made a desperate grasp at the railing, but missed it with both hands, and the next instant, uttering a wild shriek for help, was down over the railings in the midst of the ravening monsters gliding about below.

Now, as it happened, Dick and Tenderly had been spectators of the whole affair from the main-top. With the disappearance of Bulstrode, Dick exclaimed,—

“He's overboard, and he can't swim a stroke!”

Without a moment's hesitation he slid through the lubber-hole—ordinarily he dispensed with this short cut and used the futtock shrouds—and scrambled down

the main shrouds at a rate that was nothing short of perilous. Reaching the deck, he picked up a coil of small rope, and rushing to the bulwarks, tossed one end of it to Tenderly, who had followed close upon his heels, wound the other end around his left wrist, and then saying, "Keep a good hold, Arthur, and help all you can," sprang feet first into the water, where Bulstrode was sinking for the second time, with the sharks gathering close about him, ready to rend him to pieces.

Now Dick was a splendid swimmer, and, aided by the rope, would have found little difficulty in rescuing even so bulky a fellow as Bulstrode under ordinary circumstances; but it was a very different matter with a number of man-eating sharks cavorting about ready to devour whatever came within reach of their horrible jaws.

By this time the bulwarks were lined with officers and men, some shouting directions to Dick, while others with long boat-hooks tried to harpoon the sharks, and others still lowered themselves down the side by ropes, so as to lend assistance at the earliest possible moment.

The excitement was intense, yet in the midst of it all there was no one more self-possessed than Dick.

So engrossed was he in the business of rescue that he took no thought for anything else. He succeeded in grasping Bulstrode at the first dive, and rose to the surface with him held by the collar.

"Keep still now," he cried, as the big fellow struggled and sputtered. "Here, take this rope;" and he thrust the rope into his hands, which instantly closed upon it with a grip which only a drowning man can give.—"Now then, Arthur, pull away!" he cried, turning his face towards the ship.

Half-a-dozen eager pairs of hands laid hold with Arthur, and in a few moments Bulstrode was drawn alongside, where other hands grasped him and passed him up to the deck.

The moment he was relieved of his burden, Dick struck out for the ship on his own account, and for the first time realized into what deadly peril he had sprung. The sharks were all about him, their dorsal fins cleaving the water to right and left, and their white forms gleaming through its translucent green. So bold were they that they seemed to dispute his right of way back in spite of the shower of missiles that descended upon them from the excited sailors.

Splashing as much as possible, Dick forged ahead

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until his hand clasped a rope cleverly thrown by Boatswain Taffrail.

"Heave ho, my hearties!" he cried the moment his fingers closed upon it.

The men obeyed with such a will that he was well-nigh lifted clear of the water, and it seemed as if he would escape scathless after all, when the largest of the sharks, as if determined he should not, made a desperate rush and caught his left foot in its cruel mouth.

Poor Dick gave a scream of mingled fright and pain, at which old Taffrail, no longer able to restrain himself, slid down one of the ropes with his sheath-knife between his teeth, threw his left arm around the shark's head to steady himself, and then drove the knife clear up to the hilt in the monster's eye.

It was magnificently done, and a thrilling cheer went up from the spectators; for, writhing in agony, the shark let go its hold, and sank back into the water already crimsoned with its blood.

The moment Dick was released, those who held the rope drew him up to the deck, which he reached just in time to fall down in a dead faint.

When he came to himself he was in his own hammock, with the surgeon bending anxiously over

him. His foot hurt so much that involuntarily he put his hand down to it, to feel if it had been torn off by the serrated teeth of the shark. Understanding the movement, the surgeon said, with a reassuring smile,—

“Oh, it’s there still. Pretty badly scraped, to be sure; but we’ll make it all right again.”

Much comforted, Dick sank back again on his pillow, and after a moment’s quiet asked,—

“How’s Bulstrode?”

“None the worse for his ducking,” responded the surgeon, in a tone of decided indifference; “you’re the one we’re concerned about. You had a close shave for it, I tell you, Dick. If that brute had caught you a little higher up, I wouldn’t like to answer for the consequences.”

Dick closed his eyes to hide the tears that filled them. What a horrible death it would have been! And his mother—surely it would have broken her heart. How thankful he should be to Divine providence, which once more had so signally protected him. And he was thankful. He believed with all his heart that God had delivered him, and while his eyes continued closed, his lips moved as he rendered praise to the Lord omnipotent.

The surgeon, thinking he was falling asleep, slipped

quietly away, and when Dick opened his eyes Tenderly stood in his place, his thin sallow countenance so full of sympathy and concern that Dick could not forbear a smile, despite the pangs that shot up from his injured foot.

At sight of the smile Tenderly brightened up amazingly.

"Oh, I am so glad!" he exclaimed; "you'll soon be all right, won't you, Dick? And oh, Dick"—here his lips trembled and his voice quivered, while the tears gathered in his pale-blue eyes—"I was so dreadfully frightened when the shark came at you, I wanted to jump right in too. But you know I can't swim, and then dear good Taffrail jumped, and I knew he'd pull you out."

Dick could not forbear another smile. The idea of Tenderly jumping into the water to rescue him had something so absurd about it. The boy could not swim a stroke—he disliked the water too much to learn; and as for trying conclusions with a shark, why, the shark would probably bite him in two before he knew what had happened to him.

But of course Dick said nothing of all this to his friend. He took his hand and pressed it warmly, saying,—

"You're a good fellow, Arthur, and you'd stand by me anywhere, I know. You'll have a chance some day to distinguish yourself. You see if you don't."

Tenderly's face grew radiant.

"I do hope I will!" he exclaimed excitedly; "I do so want to do something that other people will think fine. You know you're doing it all the time, Dick. Everybody on board except Bulstrode says you're a regular hero; and they're all right too," he added, raising his voice to give emphasis to the statement.

Now hearty praise, even from a frankly-biased friend, is by no means unwelcome, and Dick almost forgot his pain as he listened to Tenderly's praise.

Yet even more gratifying than the praises of a friend are those of an enemy who has been overcome, not by superior might, but by magnanimous service. It was not until Dick had been left alone that Bulstrode came up to express his gratitude in blundering though unmistakably sincere phrases. The hard crust of selfishness that covered his heart had been broken by Dick's heroic conduct, and the best that was in him brought to the surface. Never before in his life had he felt so thoroughly ashamed of himself, and in the first flush of this righteous repentance he did not

hesitate to follow up his words of gratitude with a frank apology for his past misconduct and a fervent request that it might be forgiven.

Dick's response was as prompt and hearty as words and tone could make it, and the two had quite a pleasant chat together.

Presently Lieutenant M'Kinstry came along with the good news that the *Gryphon* was to put back to Kingston, where Dick might go ashore, if he liked, until the foot was entirely healed and he could resume duty.

"Oh, that will be splendid!" exclaimed Dick. "I'll send and ask Mr. Wilson if I may stay there. I know he'll be glad to have me."

"A capital plan, Dick," said Mr. M'Kinstry. "You'll get well there twice as quickly as at the hospital or on board ship, and the little holiday will do you good in every way."

Accordingly, as soon as the frigate made her moorings in Kingston Harbour, Tenderly went off to call upon the Wilsons, and find out if it would be convenient for them to have Dick as a guest for a week.

He came back with a smiling face that betokened success. The warmest possible welcome awaited Dick,

and Mr. Wilson's carriage would be at the dock for him that very afternoon.

So that night found Dick comfortably installed with his friends, who were highly pleased at the prospect of having him for a whole week, for he was indeed a very entertaining guest. He loved to talk, and he had a bright, graphic way of narrating his experiences and adventures that made his company eminently agreeable.

They all did their best to spoil him that week, and as he wrote home to his mother, they seemed to be conspiring to cure him of his fondness for the sea by proving how much more pleasant it was ashore.

Dick, however, was neither spoiled nor cured. He enjoyed the week's stay immensely, and was very sorry when it came to a close. Yet no sooner had his foot healed sufficiently to allow of his putting a boot upon it and walking without pain, than he announced his intention of reporting himself ready for duty, and all the entreaties of the Wilsons could not persuade him to dally.

"No, no, please," he answered entreatingly; "I'm fit for duty now, and it's not fair for me to stay ashore any longer. You've treated me like a prince, and I can't begin to tell you how grateful I feel; but,

you know, I'm only a middy, and I mustn't do anything that looks like shirking."

So with many promises to return at the first opportunity Dick bade his kind friends good-bye, and went back to the frigate.

As he stepped on board he was met by Lieutenant M'Kinstry, whose face brightened at sight of him, and who immediately said,—

"O Dick, I'm so glad you've turned up! I was hoping you would put in an appearance to-day. How would you like to go with me to Diamond Rock?"

CHAPTER XV.

DIAMOND ROCK.

DICK was quite taken aback by this unexpected question. He knew no more of Diamond Rock than he did of Timbuctoo, and had not the remotest idea whether the lieutenant was going hunting, fishing, or fighting. But, after all, what did it matter? So long as his friend was going, that was enough for him.

"Diamond Rock, sir?" he answered, after a moment's hesitation. "I don't know anything about it; but if you want me to go, I'm ready."

"Spoken like a man!" exclaimed the lieutenant, clapping him warmly on the back. "You know almost as much about Diamond Rock as I do, and we'll soon find out the rest. Sit down now, and I'll tell you what's in the wind. This Diamond Rock lies off the south side of Martinique, about three-quarters of a mile from the shore. I've often sailed by it, and

would have taken a good squint at it if I'd ever thought they were going to ship me there. I never saw anybody on it, and they do say the sea-crabs and the birds were the only garrison it ever had before. It's the admiral's own notion sending some men and guns to the rock, and he's full of the idea; says that if all goes well he'll have the island rated on the king's books as a sloop of war, and treated as such. It's no end of a bright scheme, I think myself; for with half-a-dozen good guns, a hundred men, and plenty of ammunition, H.M.S. *Diamond Rock* ought to do a power of damage to Monsieur Parlez-vous' vessels, and make it a tough job for them to get in and out of Fort Royal Bay."

Dick listened with flashing eyes. Here was an adventure fit to stir the spirit of the dullest boy.

"Oh, how glad I am, sir, that you've asked me to go with you!" he burst out, looking up gratefully into the lieutenant's face. "It's going to be splendid fun, I know. How soon shall we go there?"

"Just as soon as we can fit out. If there's anything you want on shore, Dick, you'd better lay it in. It may be months before you get off *Diamond Rock*, if Bony's ships don't drive you off."

Three days sufficed for the necessary preparations,

Sir Samuel Hood being impatient to carry out his design, and about the middle of November the *Gryphon* sailed upon her curious mission. She had on board for Diamond Rock one hundred men, sixty being sailors, and the rest marines carefully picked from the crews of the different vessels in port—the *Gryphon* contributing twenty-five as her share, besides her first lieutenant and one of her midshipmen. Half-a-dozen guns, a large quantity of ammunition, and abundance of provisions and water in tanks constituted the garrison's equipment.

The slant across to Martinique was prosperously made, no sign of French vessels being seen, and in good time the *Gryphon* slipped past Point Varin, and stood off the mouth of Cul de Sac Marin to reconnoitre. The coast was clear. The secret had been well kept, and no preparation made to give the frigate a hostile reception.

"It looks as though we were going to have plain sailing, Dick," said Mr. M'Kinstry, rubbing his hands gleefully together. "We ought to be able to get everything up on the rock in a couple of days if the weather holds fine."

"Is that Diamond Rock, sir?" asked Dick in a surprised tone, pointing to a peak that rose sheer out of the sea before them. "How, under the skies, are

we to get guns up there, when I can't make out any way of getting up ourselves?"

"It'll be a smart job, no doubt, my boy, but we must manage it somehow. There's a bit of a beach on the other side, I hear," answered the lieutenant.

A smart job it proved indeed. On the south side the island stood up from the water as straight as a wall; on the east, the frowning cliffs, marked with gaping caves, dared anybody to approach them; on the north, a steep slope crowned with a grove of fig trees offered no encouragement. On the west side alone could any hint of a landing-place be discovered, and the narrow beach there had a fringe of foam that said plainly, "Beware of breakers."

But, breakers or no breakers, a landing had to be effected, and Lieutenant M'Kinstry, accompanied by Dick, jumped into one of the lightest cutters, and with half-a-dozen of the best oarsmen rowed for the shore. When they reached the outer edge of the breakers, the lieutenant, taking a keen glance ahead, gave directions for the perilous passage.

"Dick, run forward there, and stand by to jump the moment she beaches, keeping a tight grip on the painter.—Now, my men, head her straight for the shore, and pull for all you're worth. Give way!"

As one man the six brawny sailors buried their blades in the water, making the stout ash bend like willow wands in their grasp. The swift boat shot forward with the dart of a dolphin, and in a few moments the breakers were foaming and frothing all about her.

"Steady now, steady!" shouted the lieutenant; "all together. Hit her up; hit her up!"

The oarsmen put every ounce of strength they had into the work, looking neither to right nor left, watching only their steersman. Flung from billow to billow like a feather, the cutter still kept on her way, until a huge comber, taking her upon its broad bosom, pitched her high up the weltering beach.

"Jump now, Dick, quick!" cried Mr. M'Kinstry.

But before the words reached Dick he had sprung from the boat, painter in hand, and running out its full length dug his heels into the sand and held on; while the sailors, leaping ashore after him, grasped the gunwale, and ere the next billow had time to charge the cutter was beyond its reach.

"Well done all!" exclaimed the lieutenant. "Kroomen couldn't have done it better. Have you taken much water?"

Dick was pretty well sprinkled, and the men had

their feet wet, but the hot sun would soon repair that mischief, and in high spirits they made the boat snug, and set off to explore the island.

They found that in order to climb its precipitous back they must crawl round to the north-west side through narrow crannies and over slippery boulders, at no small risk of broken necks, until they reached the slope with the fig trees atop. Then the going became less difficult, and presently they reached the grove, and with vast sighs of relief threw themselves down to rest in its grateful shade.

When they got their breath they completed their survey of the place. It proved to be a mass of rock about a mile in circumference, and rising some six hundred feet above the sea. Caves and grottos, large and small, pitted its face, tenanted by goats, bats, and birds without number; serpents and lizards sunned themselves upon the rocks or slid noiselessly through the rank herbage, rabbits hopped in and out of their burrows, marine and tropical birds in endless variety and uncountable numbers cawed and shrieked and chattered their protests against intrusion upon their domain.

It was wonderfully interesting to Dick. To live in a big cave on an uninhabited island; to hunt goats

and birds for amusement, and cannonade French fleets for business ; to hold this fortress against the attacks the French were bound to make so soon as they found out what had been done—if there was not sufficient of both romance and adventure about this, why, he didn't know what romance and adventure meant.

“O Mr. M'Kinstry,” he exclaimed, in the fulness of his heart, “how glad I am you brought me with you ! I wouldn't wish anything better than to stay on Diamond Rock ; and I do hope the Frenchmen will give us plenty to do.”

“Never you fear about that, my fierce little fire-eater,” smiled the lieutenant ; “once Johnny Crapaud finds us out he will do his best to make it warm for us. But see here, we must look about for some way of getting up our guns and other things. We can never bring them through those breakers.”

A careful survey of the rock was accordingly made, but no practicable mode of effecting their object seemed to present itself, and the lieutenant felt somewhat disconcerted, when a happy thought flashed into Dick's bright brain, to which he gave instant expression.

“I have a plan, sir,” he said modestly ; “perhaps it could be worked.”

"What is it, Dick? let us have it."

"Why, sir, if the *Gryphon* could lay alongside the cliff over there, a hoisting-tackle might be fixed to the top of the rock, and the guns hove up by the men on board."

Lieutenant McKinsty sprang to his feet with a regular whoop, and throwing his arms around Dick, gave him a hug worthy of a bear.

"By Jove, youngster," he cried, "I believe you're inspired! That's the very thing! and it never occurred to me. Come along and let us take a good squint of the place, and then go back to the ship and report."

A closer examination showed that Dick's scheme was quite feasible so long as the sea continued calm, and in high spirits they returned to the *Gryphon*, getting a good drenching in the process of launching the cutter.

Captain Fitewell at once approved of the plan, and gave orders for it to be carried into effect without delay. Fifty men were sent off to the rock, with directions to make their way round to the cliff. The frigate carefully edged in as close as was prudent, keeping her position by anchors out fore and aft and lines fastened to the shore by means of grapnels.

A life-line was then shot to the top of the rock, and by it a heavier rope was drawn up, and finally a great cable, which served as a stay. A secure purchase was fastened to the rock, travellers were cleverly arranged to pass upon the stay, the guns were lashed to these travellers, and then, with many a "Heave-ho" and "All together," the heavy masses of metal were slowly but successfully hoisted up to their airy embrasures, Captain Fitewell looking on with approving smiles, and rubbing his hands with satisfaction at the prosperous proceeding of so daring and difficult an enterprise.

Good fortune attended every step of the undertaking. The weather continued most propitious day after day. Not a mishap occurred, perilous though most of the work was; no French man-of-war appeared upon the scene to interfere with the progress of business; and by the end of the third day Fort Diamond was gunned, garrisoned, provisioned, and ready for operations offensive and defensive. On the queen's birthday the union-jack flung out its scarlet folds gaily to the breeze from the topmost peak; the batteries roared out a royal salute, to which the frigate replied; Diamond Rock was formally put in commission as a sloop of war, to be henceforth rated as

such upon the books of the Admiralty ; and then with a parting cheer the *Gryphon* sailed away, leaving Lieutenant (now Captain) M'Kinstry and his little force to take care of themselves.

The armament of the rock had been thus arranged. On the north-west side was the slope with the grove of fig trees, having at the back an immense dry, airy grotto, which Captain M'Kinstry selected as quarters for himself and staff. Right in front of the slope, and projecting into the sea, was the Queen's Battery, with a twenty-four pounder commanding entrance to and nearly the whole of Cul de Sac Marin. From this battery a covered way led to the north-east side, where another twenty-four pounder stood ready for business, this being called Gryphon Battery. Between the two batteries a rope-ladder was fixed by which the garrison passed to the middle of the rock, where a third twenty-four pounder constituted Hood's Battery. Thence the ascent to the top wound through shrubs and over crags, and upon the summit were two long eighteen pounders, and a flagstaff defiantly flaunting the union-jack.

In the caves, many of which were perfectly dry and clean, were stowed carefully away abundance of ammunition, provisions, and water, the water on the rock

having a strong mineral quality which prevented its being used for general purposes.

All this was very delightful to Dick. It outstripped anything he had ever heard in the way of adventure, and it added much to his enjoyment that he had a companion to whom he could exclaim over and over again how delightful it was; for Tenderly was with him.

When the poor little fellow heard of Dick's going to Diamond Rock, he made up his mind that by hook or by crook he would go too. He told Dick about it, and Dick made known his desire to Mr. M'Kinstry.

"Tut! no," was the response at first. "I don't want him. He's not good for anything. He'd only be in the way."

But when, after Dick's brilliant solution of the problem of landing the guns, etc., he at Tenderly's solicitation renewed the request and pressed it earnestly, Mr. M'Kinstry relented enough to say,—

"Well, I don't mind particularly. Suppose you ask the captain about it yourself."

Dick promptly took the hint, and preferred his petition at headquarters. Captain Fitewell was too well pleased with his ingenious little midshipman to

refuse him any reasonable request, and as he could easily spare Tenderly, his answer was satisfactory.

"Take him along with you by all means, if you want him. He'll be company for you, and he'll be out of the way of his shipmates, who find so much pleasure in roughing him."

So, to his unspeakable joy, Tenderly got permission to accompany his doughty champion; and thus the two passed out of the reach of Bulstrode's tormenting, and, as it happened, never came within it again, he being transferred to another ship before they rejoined the *Gryphon*.

In the course of a couple of days things got pretty well into shape at Diamond Rock, and they were ready to receive visitors. The garrison consisted of sixty sailors, all men in the prime of life, chosen especially for good conduct, and forty marines, equally good in their way—the latter being under command of Lieutenant Watson, a sociable, good-natured fellow and excellent officer, who made the fourth member of a quartette that promised to pull famously together.

The ward-room, as they called the cave in which they took up their abode, made quite comfortable quarters, being high in the roof, large in extent, and as free from dampness as a cave in the West Indies

could be. They had a respectable outfit of tables and chairs, and instead of slinging their hammocks from the roof, they had stands for them constructed which were very convenient. Each man brought his entire kit, for there was no knowing how long their stay might be; and on the advice of Mr. McKinstry, Dick had provided himself at Barbadoes with a good shotgun and hunting-knife.

By the first of December they all felt thoroughly at home, and their duties being comparatively light, there was plenty of time for such amusement as the place afforded. Dick, with Tenderly at his side, set himself first of all to explore every nook and cranny of the island; and many a narrow escape from a broken neck he had in doing it. He found a thousand things to interest him. Wherever it could gain a lodgment, there had gathered the black tropical soil, out of which sprang a vegetation of marvellous richness and variety. Trees of small stature but immense vigour wrestled with one another for elbow-room and sunlight—palms, cedars, oaks, and iron-woods interlacing and strangling each other with their wildly-distorted limbs, while over and above them all ran the climbing lianas like the cordage of a full-rigged ship, and the parasites that fattened upon the decay

of the trunks they embraced, perfect types of pitiless ingratitude. Dick was a passionate lover of nature. He would have been an explorer if he had not been a sailor, and his feelings were not different from those of a Humboldt or Mungo Park as he pushed his way through the wonders of the tropics.

Captain McKinsty had served many years in the West Indies station, and the surroundings had no novelty to him. He was amused at Dick's boyish delight in his discoveries, and always ready to listen, and explain to the best of his ability.

"But you must be very careful, Dick my boy," he told him. "There are trees that will poison you if you touch them, and creepers that will blister your flesh like fire; and then the serpents—give them all a wide berth, for you don't know when you'll come across a *fer-de-lance*, and if he gives you the merest touch of his fang, no doctor on earth can help you."

"The *fer-de-lance*!" exclaimed Dick. "What is it like?"

"Well, there are different kinds of them, the most common being the dark gray with blue spots. But sometimes it is a bright yellow, or yellowish brown, or black with yellow belly, and so on. The safest way is to take it for granted that every snake you

see may be one of those dreadful creatures, and bear off on the other tack as sharp as you can."

"I hate snakes, so that whenever I see one I want to kill it right off," said Dick, looking a good deal awed; "but I'll leave them alone after this. I don't want one of them to kill me."

One lovely day towards the end of the month, Dick and Tenderly had been amusing themselves chasing the goats, of which one was occasionally killed for the ward-room mess, and scaring the rabbits into their warrens. They were making their way back to the cave, hurrying somewhat because it was near sundown, when in passing by a banana tree from which the fruit hung in golden clusters Dick missed a footstep, and his head collided with one of the bunches of fruit. Instantly a sharp hiss cut through the still air, and, as he recoiled in alarm, from the midst of the bananas a supple shape of bright yellow was seen to rise, to writhe, to stretch forward a hideous triangular head with blazing emerald eyes.

"Dodge, Dick, quick!" cried Tenderly, immediately realizing the awful danger.

For a moment Dick stood petrified with terror, and that moment almost cost him his life. Coiling itself upon the top of the banana bunch, the terrible *fer-de-*

lance shot out its death-dealing head straight at his cheek. One inch further and the fatal fangs would have been buried in the smooth soft flesh! Tenderly uttered a heart-rending cry. To him it appeared as if the serpent must have reached its mark. But by the mercy of God the vile creature failed. Although his feet seemed rooted to the spot, Dick instinctively threw back his head, and with a hiss of disappointment the viper fell short, and re-formed his coil for another stroke.

Then came Tenderly's opportunity. The boys always carried their cutlasses with them; they were useful in cutting through the lianas that often blocked their way. Tenderly's was in his hand when the serpent revealed itself, and now Dick's imminent peril called forth all that was heroic in the gentle, timid lad. As the *fer-de-lance*, with the quickness of thought, gathered itself together upon the bananas, Tenderly sprang forward, shouting, "Take that, you devil!" and slashed at it with all his might.

It was a blow at random, but it could not have done better work had it been aimed with the utmost deliberation. The horrible head of the serpent was just rearing itself from the coil, and the keen cutlass, descending slantingly upon it, sheared through the

narrowed neck, casting the hideous flat triangle right at Dick's feet.

Dropping his cutlass, Tenderly threw his arms about his companion, crying anxiously,—

“Dick, did he touch you?”

As if awakening from a dream, Dick shook himself and felt his cheek carefully.

“No, Arthur; he missed me, thank God!” he answered. “But oh, I thought I was done for!”

When the story was told in the ward-room, Tenderly went up many points in Captain M'Kinstry's estimation, and as between the boys, it bound them still closer in their ever-strengthening friendship.

The experience put a damper upon their ardour for exploration, and they were beginning to find the island rather dull, when, on a bright morning in March, the look-out at the peak reported the approach of a number of vessels sailing in company.

“A French convoy, ten chances to one!” exclaimed Captain M'Kinstry. “Just what we've been waiting for. Now then, let us get ready to give them a warm reception.”

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CHAPTER XVI.

A GALLANT DEFENCE.

THE war between England and France was now at its height, and each nation was straining every effort to crush the other. Spain, too, had taken a hand in the conflict, entering into alliance with France against England, and thereby greatly increasing the work of the British navy, which had henceforth to be scattered over a wider space, and its strength divided.

Counting upon this, Napoleon, who had hitherto attempted little in the line of naval operations, despatched a powerful fleet to the West Indies, with the object of harassing the British possessions there, even though permanent conquest might not be accomplished. Being joined by a number of Spanish vessels, the squadron managed to elude the British fleets, and at Dominica and St. Christopher did a good deal of damage, besides securing considerable plunder, with

which it was returning in triumph to Martinique when reported by the look-out on Diamond Rock.

The spectacle presented was certainly an imposing one, as fifteen sail of the line (eight being Spanish and seven French), with a whole cloud of frigates, schooners, and smaller craft in attendance, bore down in orderly array for Cul de Sac Marin, knowing nothing of the wasps' nest that had been established off its entrance.

Intense was the excitement but perfect the discipline at the British stronghold. There would be work for all this morning, the manifest purpose of the squadron being to pass to both right and left of the little island that looked so innocent of harm. On they came before a steady breeze, until they were well within range of the Queen's and Gryphon Batteries. Then the union-jack suddenly climbed to the top of the signal-mast, and as its red folds flung out upon the breeze, the twenty-four pounders spoke together, and their iron missiles, with admirable aim, went crashing into the sides of the two leading ships.

The amazement and alarm of those on board the fleet would be difficult to picture. They could not have been more surprised had their own admiral turned his guns upon them. No hint had they re-

ceived of their foes having found a foothold so close to one of their own possessions. Yet there was the British flag flaunting itself in their faces, and that was British thunder and British iron beyond a doubt.

What did it mean? How great was the strength of the forces upon the island? Did the rock bristle with cannon and bayonets, like a gigantic hedgehog; or were there only a gun or two, and a handful of daring men who would soon be made to pay dearly for their temerity? In lively perturbation the French and Spanish admirals and their captains scanned Diamond Rock with their telescopes. But peer as eagerly as they might, nothing could they make out save a glint of white as a sailor moved through the thick foliage, or the flash of the cannon that meantime kept up a steady, well-directed fire.

Dick and Tenderly, with ten good men, were at the summit training the long eighteen pounders downward until they pointed straight at their mark, and then sending shot after shot through the sails or into the decks of the approaching vessels.

"My eye," Dick shouted, "but this is glorious! What would Bony think if he could only see us knocking the splinters out of his fine ships in this style?—Well done, Tom!" turning to big Tom Taff-

rail, the gunner, who had just sent a shot smash into the bulwarks of a Spanish ship of the line. "That was a beauty! What a bewildered lot of bloeks they must be, to be sure!"

The fire from the rock was terribly destructive. The wind was such that the vessels could not bear away. Their only chance was to keep straight on until they could pass beyond range; and as luck would have it, the breeze fell before they could all accomplish this, leaving a group of them right under the batteries.

In the whole history of the British navy there probably never was such an extraordinary target practice; for although the ships replied to the best of their ability, they might just as well have saved their ammunition. Their tormentors were so high above them that only mortars could reach them, and the fleet had no mortars on board. So they were fain to content themselves with fierce and futile pounding at the foot of the cliffs, while Captain McKinstry and his merry men, safely ensconced above the line of fire, pegged away without the distraction of having to dodge an iron hail.

After the cannonade had been going on for some time, Dick's heart began to relent. It didn't seem a

fair fight hammering like this at vessels which could make no return. So he scrambled down the rope-ladder, and, going up to the captain, asked,---

"Shall we soon cease firing, sir? we've given them a pretty bad dose already."

"Cease firing, Dick!" exclaimed Mr. McKinsty, in surprise. "What for? is your powder giving out?"

"Oh no, sir," Dick replied; "but it doesn't seem quite fair keeping it up when they can't hit back."

"It's not our business to think of that, Dick," was the answer. "They're the king's enemies, all of them, and the more damage we can do them the better. So back to your battery, and fire away until the last vessel's out of range."

His mind relieved by these orders, Dick returned, and the long eighteen pounders, which had grown cool during his absence, soon got warm again as they sent shot after shot into the vessels below.

Presently the wind rose, the white sails of the ships and schooners bellied out before it, they began one by one to glide out of range, and within two hours from the time it began the fight was over. With sails torn, rigging damaged, bulwarks splintered, decks pierced, and many men killed and wounded, the allied squadron sailed into Cul de Sac Marin,

having on board the maddest lot of men that ever were afloat.

"We'll soon hear from them again," said Captain M'Kinstry, as they were talking over the events of the cannonade in the ward-room grotto. "I wish to heaven some of our vessels would come along and restock us with water and ammunition, for as sure as my name's Gordon we'll have a siege of it."

The union-jack was hoisted upside down in token of distress, and the sea was swept by the glasses day after day, but no sign of a British vessel appeared to gladden the eyes of the look-outs. In the meantime every preparation was made for a lengthened siege. Yet the weeks passed and the enemy came not.

Then one cloudy afternoon a solitary sail was observed beating up from the south against a north-east wind. With what intense eagerness every movement of the vessel was watched as she tacked to and fro, evidently making for Diamond Rock or Cul de Sac Marin! On she came dipping and rising through the white caps, until every sail could be distinguished. Captain M'Kinstry was scrutinizing her with beating heart. Suddenly he dropped the telescope and sang out joyfully,—

The blessed old *Gryphon*, by Jove! Hurrah! we'll get everything we need now."

The *Gryphon* it was, come to see what was wanted at Diamond Rock, and to renew supplies. Up under the lee of the rock she cleverly tacked, and then hove to with a signal flying to come on board.

"I will go off to the ship, Dick," said Captain McKistry, "and leave you in charge until I come back. Don't let the rock run away with you."

Dick laughed merrily. "No fear of the rock running away with me, sir; but please don't you let the *Gryphon* run away with you, or we'll be in a pretty bad fix here," he answered.

There was a hearty welcome on board the *Gryphon* for the commander of Diamond Rock; and over a bottle of the captain's best madeira he told the story of the attack upon the allied fleet with great gusto, while the cabin rang with praises of himself and men.

In the meantime a sudden and serious change took place in the weather. The sky darkened and lowered until it seemed as though the heavy clouds were resting upon the peak of the rock, the wind sank into an ominous calm, and again burst forth into gusts of fitful violence. The air felt murky and oppressive.

So threatening were the appearances that the officer

on watch took upon himself to send word to Mr. McKinstry that the weather was getting very ugly, and he had perhaps better run up on deck and have a look at it.

Captain McKinstry appeared at once in response to this summons, and as he did a fierce blast of wind rushed down from the mountains of Martinique and whirled his cap off his head. The sails of the frigate, which had been left unfurled, filled out and strained at their bolt-ropes as though they would tear themselves away; the deep black water boiled up into foam and spray that swept across the decks. Beyond a doubt one of those sudden storms which are the bane of that beautiful region had burst upon the *Gryphon*.

Captain Fitewell immediately gave command to slip the anchor, take in the sails, and run off before the wind.

To have attempted to remain beside Diamond Rock would have been to court destruction, for the gale now came thundering down with such violence, that all the canvas had to be clewed up except a close-reefed main-top-sail and reefed foresail, and then, almost under bare poles, the frigate scudded away into the gathering darkness, carrying off the commander of Diamond Rock.

When the captain boarded the frigate, Dick ascended Summit Battery, and there, spy-glass in hand, amused himself looking down on the *Gryphon*, and trying to make out the different figures on her deck. From this lofty eyry he had the first glimpse of the approaching storm, and as he saw the heavens darkening to the north-east he exclaimed to Tenderly,—

“My gracious, Arthur, look at that! There’s a hurricane coming as sure as life. What will the *Gryphon* do?”

With breathless concern the boys watched the storm sweep down upon the vessel; and then as she slipped her anchor and bore away before it out into the seething ocean, Dick could not help saying with a laugh,—

“Captain M’Kinstry told me not to let the rock run away with me, and I told him not to let the *Gryphon* run away with him, and now he’s gone and done it after all.”

But Tenderly did not feel much like laughing. The sight of the vanishing vessel carrying off their commander made him feel like crying.

“O Dick, what will we do?” he broke out; “how will Captain M’Kinstry get back to us?”

“The best way he can, Arthur, as soon as the

gale's over," replied Dick cheerfully. "But come, we'd better make for cover; it's going to be a wild night."

A wild night it was indeed—such a night as they had not yet experienced on the rock. The storm raged furiously until dawn, bringing with it a tremendous fall of rain, and then disappeared as suddenly as it came, the sun rising in a cloudless sky, to flood with glorious rays the well-washed face of nature.

As soon as it came light the boys mounted again to the summit to look out for the *Gryphon*. So closely were they occupied in this that they had no eyes for the other direction, until Tom Taffrail, who was with them, happening to glance shorewards, uttered one of his most expressive oaths as he shouted,—

"Mister Holland, look here! what do you think of that?"

Dick whirled around and turned his glass in the direction indicated. One look was sufficient to explain the gunner's interruption. The entrance to Port Royal was fairly white with canvas. A fleet, far larger than the one which had given the garrison such rare sport a few weeks before, was bearing down upon the rock in majestic array.

"Great heavens!" cried Dick; "they're going to attack us, and Captain M'Kinstry away!"

"That's about the meaning of it, sir," said Tom grimly. "The Dons and Moosoos weren't going to leave this hornet's nest alone long."

"And what shall we do without our captain?" queried Dick, in no small consternation.

"Do the same as if he were here, sir," replied Tom firmly—"fight the rascals until our powder's gone."

"But who'll take command, Tom?" asked the boy, still too bewildered to think clearly.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, for being so forward as to say, sir, but if Mr. Watson'll look after his marines, we sailors'll take our orders from you, sir, just the same as though you were Captain M'Kinstry himself," was honest Tom's response.

The greatness of the idea fairly staggered Dick, and with a kind of gasp he protested.

"But, Tom, hadn't Mr. Watson better take command of us all?"

Tom's rugged face darkened. A lieutenant of marines take command of a company of blue-jackets! Never so long as there was a genuine naval officer at hand, however small his stature or junior his rank. Sailors are not wont to entertain much respect for the red-coated sea-soldiers.

"Beggin' your pardon again, sir, but that wouldn't

work at all. You'll be our captain if you please, sir," he persisted.

Dick was now beginning to get his breath. His spirit stirred mightily within him. It was a glorious opportunity. He would take command of the sailors, and fight it out with the foreign fleet until the last pound of powder was spent.

Springing to his feet with a radiant, determined face, he held out his hand to the big gunner.

"We'll do it, Tom," he cried, as the huge brown paw infolded his, "you and I together; and let us get to work right away."

Lieutenant Watson was not over well pleased when he heard of the arrangement, but he had sufficient penetration to perceive that any argument would be worse than useless; and like a loyal servant of the king, he set himself to perform his part to the best of his ability. He posted his twoscore marines in the shrubbery that faced the bit of beach, so that they could, without exposing themselves, pour a galling fire upon any boats that might attempt to effect a landing. A dozen sailors, armed with boarding-pikes and cutlasses, took up position on either flank of his force, while the remaining blue-jackets were divided among the batteries. Dick went up to Sum-

mit Battery, Tenderly was assigned Hood's Battery, Tom Taffrail the Queen's; and then Diamond Rock was ready for action.

The hostile fleet presented an imposing appearance as it moved out of the bay and invested Diamond Rock. It consisted of the *Pluton* and *Berwick*, stately seventy-fours, towering up like veritable castles; the *Siren*, a stout forty-gun frigate; the *Argus*, a trim brig mounting sixteen guns; *Le Fien*, a schooner showing eighteen swivels; and eleven gunboats, each carrying three guns of small calibre. On board the vessels were fifteen hundred troops, provided with scaling-ladders and every appurtenance for a siege. Nearly three hundred guns and full three thousand men came out to attack one hundred men and five guns. Well was it for the defenders of Diamond Rock that their position was as strong as nature could make it, while their assailants had no sort of cover.

Completely encircling the island so as to engage all its batteries at once, the French fleet approached within easy range. Then the big *Berwick* opened fire, and the other vessels rapidly following her example, in a few minutes the action was in full swing.

What a wonderful scene it made on that bright

May morning: the little island thrusting its rocky peak high into air, and decked with draperies of vivid emerald, from amidst which leaped out frequent flashes of lightning, followed by the roar of cannon and the rattle of musketry; the ring of ships belching forth flame and smoke like so many fabled dragons; the cloud of gunboats dodging actively about in search of a landing-place, and meantime keeping up a heavy fire from small arms; the sound of splintering wood as the iron messengers from the rock crashed into the vessels' sides, or of rending rocks as the French cannon-balls smote the cliffs and smashed them into fragments, while the sulphurous smoke rolled up in great clouds that sometimes hid the ships from the lower batteries.

High up in the peak Dick's vision was unobscured, and with his eighteen pounders trained down until they pointed straight at the enemy's decks, he did a world of damage as he fired away as fast as the heating of his guns would allow him. He did not fail to keep a sharp look-out seaward for the *Gryphon*, and shortly after mid-day he caught sight of her rising up on the horizon.

"Thank God!" he ejaculated, "there's the *Gryphon*. She'll soon find out what's the matter, and

hurry off to Barbadoes for assistance. If we can only hold out for a few days, the French won't take us after all."

The frigate came on until she was almost within cannon-shot. Evidently Captain Fitewell wanted to see just how the matter stood, and the Frenchmen were too busy bombarding the rock to pay him any attention. So near did the *Gryphon* approach that Dick grew anxious.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed. "She shouldn't come so near; one of the seventy-fours might turn on her."

But as he spoke the *Gryphon* veered round, pointed her bow in the direction of Barbadoes, and went scudding off before the wind in fine style.

"Now, then, I must go round and tell the others," said Dick; "it will cheer them up."

So he made the rounds of the batteries, telling them the good news that the *Gryphon* had gone off to bring them aid, and getting a hearty cheer from each section of the little garrison in return.

At the Queen's Battery he found Tom Taffrail very much troubled. It seemed that the tremendous cannonade against the rock, while it did not directly injure any of the garrison, threatened to do so indirectly; for the iron hail was smashing the cliffs into

smithereens, and sending down showers of fragments upon the men that made their position increasingly dangerous.

"I'm afraid we'll have to clear out of here, Mr. Holland," said Tom, in regretful tones. "There's been three of the men hurt already, and it's getting worse all the time."

As he spoke, a broadside from the *Berwick* flew over their heads, making every man duck involuntarily as it whistled past, and plunging into the cliff sent down a regular avalanche that burst upon the battery, felling several of the men to the ground, dismantling one of the guns, and knocking Dick himself off his feet.

So heavily did he come to the ground that for a moment he was stunned, and when he recovered his senses Tom had him in his lap, and was bathing his face with water.

"O Mr. Holland, are you much hurt, sir?" cried the gunner anxiously.

Dick felt very dizzy, but not otherwise the worse; and examining himself, was rejoiced to find that a slight scalp wound received when he fell was the extent of his injuries.

But all had not got off so well. One man had

been badly wounded in the head, another's leg was broken, a third groaned over a crushed foot. Dick's mind was at once made up.

"We'll have to leave here, Tom; let the beggars land if they can. I'll go and tell Mr. Watson to bring his men up to Hood's Battery. We'll be all safe up there."

Accordingly the men were withdrawn from the lower ranges of the rock, the guns were spiked, such of the powder as could not be carried up was thrown into the sea, and then every one having safely reached Hood's Battery, the ladders were drawn up, thus cutting off all means of communication with below.

It would appear that the evacuation of the lower defences did not pass unobserved on board the fleet for presently the gunboats made a concerted movement directed at the beach below the now silent Queen's Battery. In spite of a galling fire of musketry and the rolling down of rocks and cannon-balls upon them, they gallantly persisted, and at length, just before dusk, success crowned their efforts.

"By Jove, they've landed!" exclaimed Dick, who had been peeping over the edge of the cliff. "They're on the rock. It'll be man to man now—and only ninety of us in fighting trim."

CHAPTER XVII.

AN HONOURABLE SURRENDER.

IN what force the French had landed it was impossible to tell, for darkness swiftly followed the sunset; and there was nothing to do but wait for the morning. Not much sleep had any of the little garrison that night. Dick never closed his eyes. He was possessed with the idea that under cover of favouring darkness the enemy would manage to clamber up the crags somehow and take them by surprise. So he kept watch until dawn, picking his way cautiously along the ledges, and listening intently for any sound that might betray the near approach of an assailant.

But the welcome day broke without any such attempt being made; and bidding Tom Taffrail pay particular attention to those who had landed, he went into the caves and took a short sleep, from which he awoke wonderfully refreshed.

He was glad to find that a strong wind had sprung up, as this compelled the besieging fleet to change its tactics. The ships could no longer lie composedly at anchor and belch broadsides upon the rock. They were fain to weigh anchor and spread their sails, for the anchorage was none of the best, and to remain in the position they had occupied would be to risk collision with one another or stranding on the island itself. All that they could do now was to keep on the move, tacking to and fro, and letting fly a broadside at the rock whenever they could fetch to windward of it.

"They can't bother us very much in that way," laughed Dick. "We can give our whole attention to the beggars below. Have you made out how many there are, Tom?"

"No, sir; they're hiding so close in the holes and bushes that there's no telling."

"Well, look here, Tom. Could we not creep down and get a shot at their boats? If we can smash them, we'll cut them off from the ships."

"That's a fine notion, sir. If Mr. Watson will bring his redcoats along we can try it."

Creeping silently down the precipitous sides of the island, they got into range of the boats without meet-

ing with the invaders. There were a number of launches lying under the lee of the cliffs, each having three men on board keeping it off-shore. They presented a perfect mark for the muskets, and the marines poured into them so galling a fire that in a few minutes the crews were all shot dead; and the boats being thus left to themselves went drifting off, some in the direction of Martinique and others out to sea. So far as could be made out, not a single boat was left. The French were completely cut off until reinforcements should arrive.

Great was the delight of the garrison at this successful manœuvre; and when their assailants, stung to fury by it, came boldly out from their hiding-places and sent volleys up the cliffs, the English enjoyed a hearty laugh at their futile firing, and returned the compliment with a cascade of rocks that soon sent the others into cover again.

In desultory warfare of this kind the whole day passed—the fleet being so constantly on the move that no further attempt was made to land on the rock, the French who had already landed hunting about eagerly for means to ascend the cliffs, and the brave little garrison keeping guard over every ledge and crevice, so that not a besieger could find a foothold in safety.

As the afternoon wore on their unremitting exertions under a blazing tropical sun began to tell upon the garrison. The men grew fretful and despondent. Their vigour showed signs of slackening and their courage of weakening. Among themselves they commenced discussing the question of surrender. They could see no use in prolonging the defence. It would only enrage the French the more, and make it harder to exact lenient terms of capitulation. This came at once to Tom Taffrail's ears, but not a hint of it did he pass to Dick. The old sailor was a splendid specimen of the British bull-dog. He was ready at any time to die fighting rather than surrender to any number of "frog-eaters," and this was what he had pretty well made up his mind to do in the present case.

"Now, avast there, shipmates," said he, in reply to the murmurings of the men; "just stow that gammon of yours, will you? We're a-goin' to hold out here until the *Gryphon* comes back with the squadron at her heels, and then we'll have a fine laugh at the Frenchies."

So the day dragged on to its close, Dick keeping up his spirits wonderfully, in which he was supported, let it not be forgotten, by Tenderly, who,

imitating his cheery courage, to the best of his ability ably seconded him in directing and inspiring the men.

But towards evening a discovery was made that dashed even his buoyancy. Their water supply was well-nigh exhausted. In the bustle and excitement of the struggle no care had been taken to husband it. The extreme heat, combined with incessant activity, had of course made everybody very thirsty, and the tanks were resorted to without stint. The consequence was that when examined they were found to contain a quantity that would allow only one pint to each man in the garrison.

Nor was this their only cause of concern. Their stock of ammunition was running low also—there being but enough ball cartridges to give the marines a dozen rounds apiece, while of powder and shot for the big guns there hardly remained sufficient wherewith to maintain a day's active firing.

When this became generally known, the men felt no longer bound to keep silence, and were outspoken in their request that a flag of truce should be sent to the enemy.

But Dick, loyally supported by Lieutenant Watson, Tenderly, and Tom Taffrail, would not be per-

suaded. His determination was to hold out for one day longer at least. The *Gryphon*, of course, could not possibly be back so soon; but the French might be driven to raise the siege in order to repair damages, and while they would be doing this there would be time for the succouring squadron to reach them.

He argued with the men very patiently, and as if to strengthen his urgings, in the very midst of the conference the heavens darkened with a thunderstorm, and a heavy downpour of rain followed, which seemed like a message of cheer from the heavens.

"Quick now!" cried Dick; "catch every drop you can."

With their minds turned into a new channel, the men set themselves to save all they could of the precious fluid, running about with pans and pails, dipping it up from the hollows in the rocks, and thus gathering enough to last them with economy for several days more.

This brisk diversion quite heartened them up, and when the rain was over they willingly agreed to hold out for one more day at least.

Another night of anxious watching, yet undisturbed by any actual attempt on the part of the



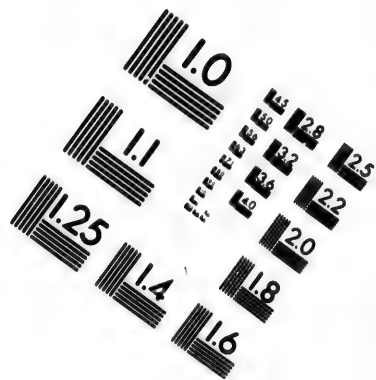
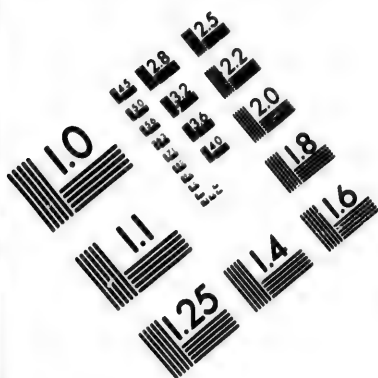
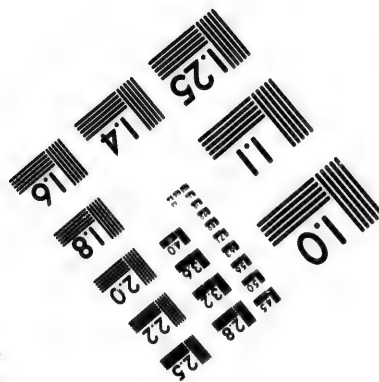
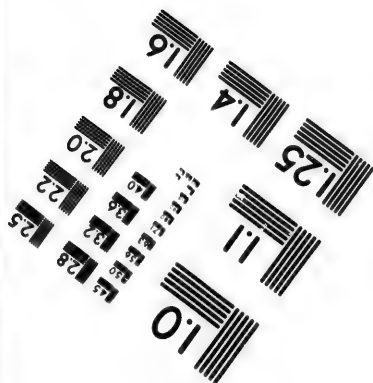
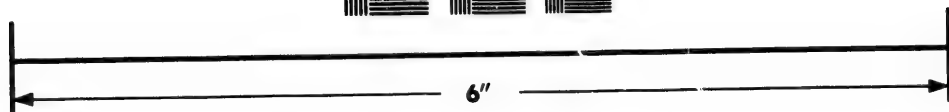
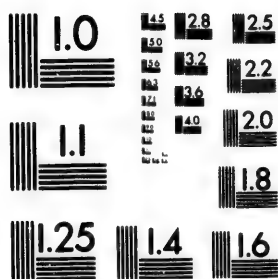


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besiegers to ascend, and the sun rose on the third morning of this strange struggle.

But the fates were not so kind to the beleaguered garrison this day as they had been the day previous. On the contrary, they now smiled upon the French, giving them a breathless calm that perfectly suited their purposes, while it could not help delaying the British fleet if already on its way up from Barbadoes.

Dick's heart sank when he realized this. He went up to the peak to eagerly sweep the horizon with the glass, in the hope of catching some glimpse of approaching aid, but he saw no cheering glint of white rising on the glassy water. He saw something else, however, that filled him with grave apprehension.

The French fleet had grown to nearly double its former size! Four more ships of the line and many smaller vessels had been added to it during the night. And there it lay now upon the gleaming water, encircling H.M.S. *Diamond*, with its hundreds of gaping guns and thousands of troops thirsting for battle.

An ominous quiet prevailed, so far as their cannons were concerned, but an intense activity in the number of boats. Every launch and cutter in the fleet

seemed to be afloat, and buzzing around the ships like some huge kind of water-fly.

"It's easy to guess what they're about now, Tom," said Dick, in a tone that for the first time had a note of despondency in it: "we'll soon have them upon us like a swarm of mosquitoes."

"Let them come on," replied Tom sturdily. "We'll give them the best we've got; and when we can't fight them any longer, we'll surrender."

"All right, Tom," said Dick, glad to find that the big sailor, upon whose influence with his comrades he had greatly to depend, was still full of fight; "that's what we'll do. So come along; let's get ready to receive our visitors."

He had hardly spoken when a gun was fired from the admiral's ship, and in response to this signal the swarm of launches began to move out from among the fleet and make for the rock. They did this in perfect silence; for although it would have been good strategy on the part of the ships to cover their approach with a heavy cannonade, this could not be done without imperilling the lives of the besiegers who had already found a foothold upon the island.

As soon as the launches came within range the garrison of Diamond Rock opened fire upon them,

and with such good aim that more than one was smashed and its occupants tumbled into the water, thus causing other boats to delay in picking them up. But despite these interruptions, the enemy kept resolutely on until they got too close to the cliffs to be reached by the guns. Then Dick gave orders that, reserving their ammunition, his little force should greet their foes with showers of rocks and oppose their scaling the heights to the very last.

"The more trouble we give them the better terms we'll be able to make," said he shrewdly, and everybody saw the soundness of his reasoning.

So, as the French landed, they were met with successive avalanches of rock, which put many of their men *hors de combat* and seriously damaged several more of the launches. Only for their overwhelming numbers, they might not have gained the day even as it was. But they had brought with them scores of scaling-ladders, and these were fixed in as many different places simultaneously, so that the little garrison, unable to protect every point attacked, were at last driven to retreat to Hood's Battery half-way up to the peak, and there make a final stand.

The courage displayed by all was beyond praise. They knew they were outnumbered ten to one, that

their ammunition was giving out, and that their supplies of provisions and water would soon be exhausted, and yet they fought on undauntedly, causing the assailants to imagine that their strength must be far greater than it really was.

Dick was indefatigable. From point to point he made his way, cheering his men, searching for the enemy with his keen eyes, and letting loose boulders upon their heads whenever he caught a glimpse of them. Watson and Tenderly were hardly less active. The sailors and marines vied with one another in prompt obedience and unflinching bravery.

Hour after hour went by in this unequal struggle. The sun passed its zenith, and still the garrison held out. But it was terribly exhausting work in that pitiless heat. There was little or no shade for the heroic handful, and during the afternoon several of them fainted at their posts, Tenderly being one of the first to succumb.

This new source of danger brought to head the resolution that had already been forming in Dick's mind. Taking Mr. Watson and Tom Taffrail aside, he laid it before them.

"It's just this way," said he. "Here we are pretty well tuckered out. Not a man of us is fit to keep

watch to-night. The French will have it all their own way. They'll swarm on us in the darkness, and like as not kill us all before sunrise. It seems to me our best plan is to make what terms we can with them before it's too late."

Without any argument the others assented, and the scheme was forthwith put into operation. A sheet tied to the rammer of a gun made an excellent flag of truce. Standing upon a projecting point where he could be easily seen by those below, Dick waved it vigorously. It was observed at once. The firing ceased, cheers of joy and exultation took its place. Never were besiegers gladder at the sign of victory.

Lieutenant Watson was familiar with the French language, and to him was committed the task of negotiating the terms of capitulation. He hurriedly drew them out upon a sheet of paper. They were very brief, and in substance as follows: That the rock should be surrendered with all its stores; that the garrison should be allowed to march to the Queen's Battery with drums beating and colours flying, and there lay down their arms; that all private property should be secured to the officers and men; that they should be sent to the Barbadoes at the expense of the French; and finally, as a sort of clincher,

that the garrison were capable of holding out for a few days longer, and if the terms were not assented to within two hours hostilities would be renewed.

For sublime "cheek" (no other word can fitly express it) it would not be easy to parallel these conditions of capitulation in martial history. The dauntless spirit of Dick and the dogged determination of Tom Taffrail spoke through every line of them. Lieutenant Watson thought them over bold, but yielded to the others, and bearing a small flag of truce, descended the cliff to parley with the enemy. He was received with the utmost respect, and carried off to the French admiral.

The admiral could not repress a smile as he read the cartel; it was so magnificently audacious in tone. He tried to worm out of Mr. Watson some hint as to the strength of the garrison, but he might as well have endeavoured to extract confidences from a clam. He then held a consultation with the chief officers, and their unanimous advice was to agree to the proposals. They reasoned soundly enough that, not knowing the strength or resources of the garrison, nor at what moment a British fleet might make its appearance, and considering how many men and boats had been lost already, it was better to run no further

risks. If the terms were accepted, Diamond Rock would be theirs before sunset, and all their trouble would be rewarded.

So the upshot of the matter was that the admiral assented to the conditions of capitulation without any modification, and with a glad heart Lieutenant Watson bore the good news back to his expectant comrades. Great was the satisfaction of the little garrison at his report. Dick gave voice to the feelings of all when he cried joyously,——

“Hurrah, shipmates! We’ve had to give in, but it’s an honourable surrender—nothing to be ashamed of, I vow; and if the *Gryphon* had only got back in time—but never mind, it’s no use crying over spilt milk. Let’s all put our best duds on now, and get ready to march to the Queen’s Battery as if we were going to inspection.”

Half-an-hour sufficed to make the necessary preparations; and then, not without some sharp qualms of regret mingling with their feelings of relief, the little band of heroes, arrayed in their best uniforms and carrying their arms, descended the cliffs, formed into line on the level below, and, with drums beating gaily and colours flying, marched in good order to the Queen’s Battery.

When the French saw the number of their opponents, and realized that for three days and two nights this handful of men had defied the utmost efforts of a powerful fleet supported by thousands of soldiers, they were at first silent with astonished admiration. Then the gallantry that distinguished their nation broke forth. What mattered it that these bronzed, haggard, weary men, who seemed to be under the command of a bit of a boy, were their hereditary enemies, and had just cost them many lives and done them heavy damage? They were true warriors notwithstanding; and so, snatching off their caps, officers and soldiers with one accord sent up a cheer that awoke the echoes of the farthest crag. It was the spontaneous tribute of brave hearts to brave hearts, and many an eye in the garrison dimmed with tears.

"Blame my old eyes!" muttered Tom Taffrail, "but these 'frog-eaters' are not such a bad lot after all."

Dick, with Lieutenant Watson and Tenderly, received a cordial welcome on board the *Pluton*, where they found several officers who were proficient in the English language, and spent a very pleasant evening detailing the events of the siege from their side of the struggle. From a comparison of the casualties, it appeared that while the beleaguered garrison's list

comprised only two men killed, half-a-dozen wounded, the besiegers had over a hundred men killed, nearly twice as many wounded, and had also lost three gun-boats and two launches.

Mr. Midshipman Dick was an object of deep interest to the French officers. They were greatly tickled at the idea of such a mite defying their whole force as he had done, and went so far as to express the opinion that if all the officers in the British navy were made of similar stuff, it was not much use for Buonaparte to contest the supremacy of the seas with King George.

The following morning the *Pluton*, flying a flag of truce at her mast-head, bore the garrison off to Barbadoes. A couple of days' good sailing brought her to Carlisle Bay; and as she rounded to at the anchorage, there lay the *Gryphon* in full view, fast at the moorings—the fact of the matter being that Captain Fitewell found no ships available for the relief of Diamond Rock, and was compelled to await the arrival of the fleet which was daily expected.

Right royal was the reception given to Dick and Lieutenant Watson, and Tenderly and Tom Taffrail, and all the rest of the brave little band. In the general joy at their safe deliverance and the gallant

defence they had made, regret at the loss of Diamond Rock was for the time swallowed up. Even Captain M'Kinstry forgot his keen chagrin at being so strangely deprived of the pleasure of remaining in command until the close of the brilliant struggle.

A few days later the expected fleet arrived, and who should be the admiral in command but the renowned Lord Nelson himself, who had dashed across the Atlantic to balk Napoleon's scheme for the regaining of the West Indies.

Imagine Master Dick's feelings on being presented to the greatest of England's naval heroes. How deeply that day burned in his memory! Laying the one small delicate hand that was left him upon the boy's shoulder, and looking into his blushing face with inexpressible tenderness and pride, he said to him,—

"God be thanked for boys of your mettle! Never will our dear Mother England cease to be mistress of the seas while she bears such sons as you. Take rank as sub-lieutenant from to-day."

Dick could hardly credit his ears. Sub-lieutenant, and he little more than two years on shipboard! But Lord Nelson had said it, and his word was law. With what trembling eagerness he wrote the good news home to his mother, saying joyfully to himself

that she could no longer regret his going into the navy when promotion had come so rapidly.

In the kind providence of God it came about that Dick himself followed not long behind the letter; which did indeed bring great gladness to the cottage in Kent, where Mrs. Holland had already allowed her dread of the sea to be submerged by a keen interest in her son's progress: for Lord Nelson, soon finding out that Napoleon's threat of a concerted attack upon the British West Indies had been only a ruse to draw him away from the European waters where he was much more needed, hurried back thither, taking the *Gryphon* in his fleet.

The voyage across the Atlantic was prosperously accomplished, and then some time had to be spent refitting and repairing the ships, in preparation for the tremendous struggle before them. This gave Dick an opportunity to obtain a fortnight's furlough, and to betake himself to Kent. He sent no warning of his coming, and, as it chanced, found his mother in the garden, re-reading for the twentieth time his last packet of letters, while the tears filled her eyes, and her lips moved in prayer for the angel of the Lord to encamp round about her darling boy, and to deliver him from the dangers that so thickly beset his life.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

TRAFALGAR AND HOME AGAIN.

JOYFUL beyond description was that meeting between mother and son. Again and again did Mrs. Holland clasp Dick to her heart and cover his well-tanned cheeks with fervent kisses. Then holding him forth at arm's length, she scanned him from head to heel, exclaiming,—

"My darling boy! what a man you've grown to be, and oh, how you are like your father!"

The two years' separation had wrought little change in Mrs. Holland. The smooth dark hair had, perhaps, some additional streaks of silver, and there may have been some deeper lines in the comely countenance, but that was all.

Dick, on the other hand, presented a very different appearance from what he did on the day he first trod the deck of the *Gryphon*. He was full two inches taller, quite twenty pounds heavier, several tones

darker of skin, and ever so many degrees more dignified of bearing. In fact, he had completely outgrown all justification of the *sobriquet* of "Dicky-bird," and no longer ran any risk of being nicknamed "the Bantam."

The mother's fond eyes missed none of these signs of development, and she found in them no slight recompense for the long days of waiting.

"Ah, Dick!" said she, with a sigh of resignation, "I'm afraid I must confess that you made no mistake in choosing the sea. You were born for it, as your father was before you. But God grant you a longer life than fell to his lot."

The days of that visit home sped by swiftly, while Dick talked and walked with his mother, and was proudly exhibited for the admiration of the friends and neighbours. His mother was loath to spare him from her sight for an hour, and Dick, knowing that the call to duty might come at any moment, devoted his whole time to her, being determined to give her all the pleasure that was in his power.

It was late in September when the order came to report for active service, and poor Mrs. Holland had once more to endure the pang of parting. This time she had good cause for solicitude. The crisis of the

struggle for supremacy between the British fleets and the combined naval forces of France and Spain could not be long delayed. The world was awaiting it with anxious expectation. If England failed of victory, the proud title of Mistress of the Seas would be no longer hers. But England had Nelson to command her navy, and in him the king and the people put their trust.

When Dick arrived at Portsmouth, he was delighted to learn that instead of rejoining the *Gryphon* he would go to the *Victory*, Lord Nelson's own ship, a magnificent vessel carrying one hundred guns. This signal honour he owed to his services at Diamond Rock, the great admiral having particularly selected him to fill a vacancy in the number of sub-lieutenants.

Now the post of sub-lieutenant on a flag-ship was in every way more desirable than the same rank on a frigate, and sorry as Dick was to part company with the *Gryphon*, and with Captain Fitewell and First Lieutenant M'Kinstry and dear old Taffrail, not to mention poor Tenderly, who looked as though he could barely keep back a burst of tears when Dick bade him good-bye, still there was more than sufficient compensation in the many advantages accruing to his new appointment.

"You're a lucky chap, Dick," were Lieutenant M'Kinstry's farewell words. "But I don't grudge you your good fortune; you've deserved every bit of it richly. Keep right on as you're doing, and you'll get to the top in no time."

On board the big *Victory* there seemed to be almost as many officers as there had been seamen in the *Gryphon*, and Dick felt himself to be of little account in such a throng. But the fame of his defence of Diamond Rock went with him, and although he was much the youngest sub-lieutenant on board, he found his fellow-officers ready to admit him without question to an equal footing, and to treat him with due consideration from the start.

All minds were engrossed with the great struggle so near at hand, and impatient for it to begin. Great, therefore, was the satisfaction of all when on the 15th September the *Victory* sailed from Portsmouth, bearing Lord Nelson to take the chief command of the Mediterranean fleet, then under the command of Vice-Admiral Lord Collingwood.

Being joined by the *Euryalus*, *Ajax*, and *Thunderer*, the flag-ship proceeded to meet the fleet, then cruising off Cadiz, in which harbour the combined navies of France and Spain had rendezvoused. A lot

of manœuvring for an advantage and other delays ensued, so that it was the 21st of October before the two great fleets fairly faced one another in line of battle off Cape Trafalgar.

Lord Nelson's command consisted of some thirty-three vessels, ranging in size from the mighty *Victory* and *Royal Sovereign*, of one hundred guns each, down to the saucy schooner *Pickle*, carrying but a single swivel gun. Of the whole number, twenty-seven were ships of the line. The Franco-Spanish fleet comprised forty vessels, the largest being the *Santissima Trinidad*, of one hundred and thirty guns, and the command being in the hands of Vice-Admiral Villeneuve, a brave and skilful seaman.

Dick's heart thrilled with elation as on that eventful morning which was to decide his country's fate the hostile fleets bore down upon each other like two flocks of gigantic sea-birds. The breeze, which came from the south-west, was very light, and the studding-sails were set on every ship. Lord Nelson had disposed his fleet in three columns, he himself taking the van of the centre column.

Considering that the *Victory*, both as being the front of a column and bearing the flag of the commander-in-chief, would draw upon herself the whole

weight of the enemy's fire, and thereby doubly endanger the life of him to whom all looked up for the success of the day, the principal officers took counsel together, and decided to try to persuade the admiral to allow the *Téméraire*, then close astern, to take the lead, and thus bear the brunt of the fire.

When the matter was broached to Lord Nelson, he replied with a significant smile, "Oh yes, let her go ahead," meaning if she could.

The *Téméraire* was accordingly hailed to take her station ahead of the *Victory*; but when she ranged up on the *Victory's* quarter in order to pass her and lead, Lord Nelson hailed her, and speaking, as he always did, with a slight nasal intonation, said,—

"I'll thank you, Captain Harvey, to keep in your proper station, which is astern of the *Victory*."

It happened that, just as he spoke, Lieutenant Yule, who commanded on the forecastle, observing that the starboard lower studding-sail was improperly set, ordered it to be taken in for the purpose of setting it afresh. Lord Nelson noticed this instantly, and running forward gave the lieutenant a severe rating for having, as he supposed, begun to shorten sail without the captain's orders. So the studding-sail

was promptly replaced, and the *Victory*, as the gallant chief intended, continued to lead the column.

Dick was a spectator of all this, and his heart thrilled with admiration at the superb courage of this slight, delicate-looking man, who, although an eye and an arm had already been sacrificed in the service of his country, took no thought of himself however great the peril, but shared it to the full with the humblest sailor in his command.

"What a splendid man he is!" he exclaimed enthusiastically to another officer standing by. "He's going to take just the same chances as any of us. Who wouldn't do their very best for such an admiral?"

"You may well say so," responded the other. "He's the greatest admiral England's ever had. But look, what's the signal that's being given?"

They both watched with eager interest the flags as they one by one were raised to the mizzen-top-gallant-masthead of the *Victory*. The numbers were as follows:—253, 269, 863, 261, 471, 958, 220, 370, 4, 21, 19, 24. And as their signification broke upon the fleet there came not only from the crowded decks of the flag-ship, but from all the other ships, round after round of true British cheers, that showed

with what lively enthusiasm the magic message was received.

It had come about in this way. As the two fleets drew near each other slowly, the thought flashed into Lord Nelson's mind to give his own men something by way of a fillip. After musing awhile he said,—

“Suppose we telegraph that ‘Nelson expects every man to do his duty.’”

The officer he addressed ventured to suggest that it might be better to have it “England expects every man to do his duty.”

“Certainly, certainly,” exclaimed the admiral, warmly adopting the emendation; and just a little before noon there fluttered out on the breeze the first flag of the famous message that was thereupon to become one of the most renowned in the world's history.

At the main-top-gallant-masthead of the *Victory* floated two flags that formed Lord Nelson's customary signal on going into action. They meant “Engage the enemy more closely”—a command those to whom it was addressed were only too eager to obey.

Much to Dick's disappointment, the *Victory* was not the first ship to go into action. Owing to the formation of the line of attack, and the changing posi-

tion of the Franco-Spanish fleet, the *Royal Sovereign*, which led the right column, first got within range of the enemy, and having reached a position close astern of the *Santa Anna*, a huge one hundred and twelve bearing the flag of Vice-Admiral Don Mara del Alava, fired into her with guns double-shotted, and with such precision as to kill and wound nearly four hundred of her crew.

Dick was fairly dancing with impatience as the *Victory* moved steadily and silently on.

"Why don't we fire at them?" he exclaimed to the officer next to him; "we're near enough to hit them every time."

"No doubt we are," the other replied, "but the admiral is never in a hurry to open fire. He always waits until he's got into just the position he thinks best. He's looking for the French admiral now, and will keep the guns cool until he finds him."

This was precisely what Lord Nelson was doing. In the centre of the enemy's line lay the *Bucentaur*, having on board Admiral Villeneuve, and to her he was determined to give his entire attention. Accordingly he continued straight on, and although as soon as the *Victory* got within range the whole van of the French division opened fire upon her simultaneously

and with destructive effect, no answer came from the British flag-ship, but she forged steadily on as silent as a spectre.

Seeing by the direction of her course that the *Victory* was about to follow the example of the *Royal Sovereign*, the French and Spanish ships ahead of the British weather column closed like a forest, and toward this combination Lord Nelson proceeded.

Just as the *Victory* got within about five hundred yards of the larboard beam of the *Bucentaur*, her mizzen-top-mast was shot away, about two-thirds of another shot knocked to pieces the wheel, a third killed eight marines on the poop, and a fourth, that had come through a thickness of four hammocks near the port chess-tree, and had carried away a part of the port quarter of the launch as she lay on the booms, struck the fore-brace bits of the quarter-deck, and passed between Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy, a splinter from the bits bruising the left foot of the latter, and tearing the buckles from his shoe.

Both men stopped instantly, and looked at each other inquiringly, each supposing the other to have been wounded. Then his lordship smiled and said,—

“This is too warm work to last long. In all the battles in which I have fought I never witnessed such

splendid courage and coolness as my men are showing to-day. I am confident of winning the victory of my life."

No wonder his men were brave and cool when they had so inspiring an example in their own commander, who so lightly valued personal risk that he would not suffer those barriers against the enemy's grape and musketry, the hammocks, to be arranged one inch higher than, to facilitate his view of objects around him, they were accustomed to be stowed.

So heavy and unremitting had been the fire concentrated upon the *Victory*, that she soon began to show serious effects from it. Every studding-sail boom had been shot off close to the yard-arm, and every sail, especially on the foremast, riddled like a sieve, while on the decks some score of officers and men had been killed and nearly twice as many wounded.

Although exposed to the same risks as the others in the performance of his duty beside the guns on the quarter-deck, Dick had hitherto escaped injury, and was eagerly awaiting the moment when, the *Victory* having come to close quarters with one of her huge antagonists, the command to board should be given.

Not in any fierce lust for others' blood, but in a noble spirit of determination to shed the last drop of his own fighting the enemies of his country, Dick threw himself into the struggle with all the ardour of his fervent nature. He took no thought for his own safety, but again and again exposed himself to the full fire of the Spanish musketeers while endeavouring to get a better view of the battle than could be obtained from his position on the deck.

As the *Victory* slowly moved ahead, her opportunity came to make some return for the merciless cannonading she had endured. Ranging close to the *Bucentaur*, the sixty-eight pounder carronade on the port side of the forecastle, containing the usual charge of one round shot and a keg filled with five hundred musket-balls, was fired right into the cabin windows of the French flag-ship, and then slowly moving ahead, every gun of the remaining fifty in her broadside, all double and some of them treble shotted, was deliberately discharged in the same raking manner. So close were the ships that the port main yard-arms of the British three-decker as she rolled touched the vang of her opponent's gaff; so close, indeed, were they that had there been wind enough to blow it out, the large French ensign trailing at the *Bucentaur's*

peak might have been a trophy in the hands of the *Victory's* crew.

A ringing cheer, in which Dick heartily joined, rose from the decks of the *Victory* as the awful destruction wrought by this broadside became manifest; for although it was the work of scarcely two minutes, and although not a mast or yard of the *Bucentaur* was seen to come down, there had been nearly four hundred men killed and wounded on board her, over a score of guns had been dismounted, and the fine flag-ship was reduced to a comparatively defenceless state.

Shaking herself free from the *Bucentaur*, the *Victory* now pushed on in quest of fresh antagonists. Right in her path stood the *Redoubtable*, a stalwart seventy-four, and keeping straight on, the two ships were presently side by side, the sheet anchor of the one striking the spare anchor of the other, and the *Victory's* starboard foretop-mast studding-sail boom-arm getting hooked into the leech of the *Redoubtable's* foretop-sail.

A tremendous hand-to-hand conflict immediately ensued between the crews of the two vessels, each trying to clear the other's decks, and board with intent to capture. Dick plunged into the thick of the fight,

thrusting and slashing with his keen cutlass, and bearing himself like a man of mature years.

It was terrible work. The air was foul and heavy with the reek of gunpowder, and dense with particles of crumbled wood. The decks were strewn with the dead and wounded, and slippery with their blood. The roar of cannon and the splintering crash of shattered bulwarks stunned the ear, while the shrieks of the suffering and the shouts of the frenzied combatants united in an awful chorus more suggestive of hell than of earth.

Yet there was perfect discipline on board the British flag-ship. Each man fought in his own place and according to the orders of his own officer, while through all the hideous turmoil the wonderful little admiral, dressed in the same threadbare frock uniform coat which was his constant wear, having for its only decorations four weather-tarnished and lack-lustre stars sewed upon the left breast, paced up and down the promenade, which he had caused to be made by removing the large skylight over his cabin and plank-ing the space thus created.

After several attempts, Dick, in company with a score of others, had just succeeded in gaining a foothold on the deck of the *Redoubtable*, when a blow from

a boarding-pike took him unawares. It caught him full in the forehead, and although happily the peak of his cap saved his skull from being fractured, he was felled to the deck insensible, and to all appearances dead.

Fortunately his fall had not been unnoticed. A brother officer observed it, and at once rushed to pick him up. Seeing at a glance that he was only stunned, he called to a big boatswain,—

“Here, Bowline! carry Mr. Holland back to the ship and hand him over to the surgeons.”

Looking rather reluctant to leave the fight, which he was evidently enjoying heartily, the boatswain picked Dick up with ease, and bearing him back to the *Victory*, deposited him upon the quarter-deck close by the combings of the cabin ladder-way, to await his turn at the hands of the overworked surgeons.

As Dick lay there senseless there befell a calamity which gloomed the gladness of that glorious victory.

During the whole of the operations that have been outlined, Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy had been walking up and down the promenade built over the hatchway. It was about half-past one o'clock, and the two had just arrived within one pace of the regular turning spot at the cabin ladder-way, when the admiral,

who, regardless of quarter-deck etiquette, was walking on the port side, suddenly faced left about. Captain Hardy, when he had taken the other step, turned also, and as he did so saw Lord Nelson in the act of falling.

He was then on his knees trying to support himself by means of the one hand that was left him, but this giving way he fell over on his left side, exactly upon the spot where, a little while before, his secretary, Mr. Scott, had been killed by a round shot.

Rushing to his chief's side, Captain Hardy said as he bent to lift him up,—

"I hope you are not badly wounded, sir?"

Lord Nelson shook his head sadly.

"They have done for me at last, Hardy," he said.

"Oh no, I hope not," responded the captain reassuringly.

"Yes, they have," was the mournful response: "my backbone is shot through."

And so it was. A musket-ball fired from the mizzen-top of the *Redoubtable* had entered the left shoulder through the front of the epaulet, and descending had lodged in the spine.

Calling up several of the men, Captain Hardy had them bear their beloved commander-in-chief below;

and while they were doing so, Lord Nelson, fearing lest his fall should dispirit the crew, took his handkerchief from his pocket and covered his face with it, that he might not be recognized.

The next one to be borne to the cock-pit was Dick, still silent and motionless.

While the great admiral's life was slowly ebbing away, and consciousness was returning to the boyish sub-lieutenant, the eventful struggle went on, until one by one the French and Spanish ships had either struck their colours or fled in dire confusion, and the British vessels, though cruelly battered and mourning the loss of many a gallant seaman, were left unquestioned conquerors.

It had been indeed a notable victory. Nine French and nine Spanish sail of the line were captured, and the maritime power of both nations broken for many decades to come. Yet the British people felt that the cost had been all too great, since part of the price was paid by their best-beloved warrior, who breathed his last with the shouts of triumph beating upon his ears.

Although the effects of the blow were perceptible for some time after, Dick resumed duty the following morning; and, when the fleet went back to England,

was able to take his part in the proceedings of mingled rejoicing and mourning that marked the return of the victors.

Rewards and honours fell thick and fast upon all who had had a share in the historic struggle, and Dick was not overlooked. Despite his youth he was promoted to a full lieutenancy, and then was granted a three months' furlough, to be spent wherever he pleased.

Having brought him back once more to that sunny cottage in Kent, this record must bid him farewell, yet not without adding this, that ever keeping on the right tack he sailed steadily forward across the ocean of life, fearing God and loving his neighbour, respected and beloved by all with whom he came in contact, until in due time, though not before an admiral's hat had covered his head, he reached that desired haven whither the right tack surely leads.

THE END.

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